

MEDITATIONS
FOR
EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR,
ON THE PRINCIPAL DUTIES OF
CHRISTIANITY.

Translated from the French of Père Griffet, of the Society of Jesus,

By the Rt. Rev. Wm. Walsh, D. D.

Bishop of Halifax.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

NEW-YORK:
EDWARD DUNIGAN & BROTHER,

151 Fulton Street.

1849.







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BY
THE RIGHT REV. WILLIAM WALSH, D.D.,
BISHOP OF HALIFAX.

"I meditated on thy commandments which I loved."—*Psalms cxviii. 47.*

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MEDITATIONS
FOR
EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

JULY 1.

ON THE BLINDNESS OF WORLDLINGS WITH REGARD TO THE ESSENTIAL DECENCIES OF THEIR CONDITION.

I. *It is this blindness which makes them so coolly violate the precept of alms-giving.*

Because it prevents them from seeing in their property any thing superfluous which could belong to the poor, and which they should be obliged to employ for their relief. It is difficult for them to be ignorant as to the extent of their riches, by imagining that they are more wealthy than they really are. They well know their means; they know their bounds, their measure and their extent; but they are almost blind, or at least they affect to be so with regard to the essential

decencies of their condition. They form so false and so extravagant an idea in this respect, that they can never persuade themselves that their expenses are above their condition: they will, on the contrary, maintain that they are hardly equal to it.

II. *Rule to be observed in order to remove this blindness.*

It consists in regulating our expenses, not by what our means will permit, but by what our condition will require. Religion desires not to reduce you to a degrading simplicity in this respect, but it will not admit your suitable expenses to reach the same extent that the world would allow. You allege that such an expense is not above your condition; this is not the case; you are bound to see what you can retrench without degrading your condition.—For every thing which may be retrenched without injuring your state is an excess, a palpable superfluity which religion condemns, and which it

obliges you, by a rigorous precept, to expend in charity.

JULY 2.

ON THE USE OF RICHES.

I. Before we use them, we should examine whether they really belong to us.

How and by what means have they come into your possession? If they are not the fruit of your own injustice, are they of the injustice of your parents or ancestors? How many do we not behold in the world who make a display, only with the property of others, and who accumulate, at the same time, many debts, and much expense? If all the wealth which you possess did not belong to you, and you would be allowed to make no other use of it than to restore it, you would be bound to reduce yourself to the simplest and plainest necessities of life, in order to comply with this indispensable obligation.

II. *We should examine whether the use we are about to make of our riches be advantageous, reasonable, worthy of being referred to God, and capable of conducting us to heavenly bliss ; whether*

The employment of our wealth, be becoming in a Christian who professes to give a preference to God and his salvation before the pomps and vanities of the world. Whoever observes this rule in the outlay of his riches, will employ more of them in relieving the poor than in procuring the vain and frivolous amusements of life. He will never make himself a spectacle to the world by a hateful disdain which seems to insult public misery.

JULY 3.

ON THE INEQUALITY OF CONDITIONS.

I. *God wished to have this inequality, in order to establish a mutual dependence between all the members of society.*

If you remove those wants which bind men to each other, if you render all men equal in riches, in grandeur, and in power,

there will be neither order nor subordination in society ; it would then be no more than a body composed of separate and divided members, which would have no relation to each other, and which would render no mutual assistance. It is, therefore, necessary that there be in the world both kings and subjects, masters and servants, and of necessity rich and poor. The rich man is then created for the poor, and the poor for the rich—the former, to give the poor what will sustain life ; the latter, to give the rich an opportunity of working out his salvation.

II. *In imposing, on the rich, an obligation of supporting the poor, God intended to establish a sort of equality between them.*

You are rich ; you have every thing in abundance. That is the law of inequality. But you are bound to succour those who want every thing, and by that means God has established between them and you, a sort of correspondence which approximates you to equality. It belongs to the

justice and goodness of God to provide that the whole world shall have what is necessary; but on account of the law of inequality, the whole world not having what is necessary, it became indispensable to establish that of the poor man, on the superfluity of the rich.

JULY 4.

ON THE HONOUR WHICH WE GIVE TO GOD BY
ALMS.

I. *The wise man says, that he who has compassion on the poor, honours God.*

The reason of this is clear. God, as the common Father of all men, ought to provide for the subsistence of the poor, who are his children and creatures as well as the rich. He has not done so by giving the poor what is necessary for them, but he has charged the rich to supply and provide for them out of their abundance. Hence, when they acquit themselves of this obligation, they enter into the views of Providence and justify them. They prove by their charity that this always

just Father has provided for the wants of all his children ; and in obeying his law, they do honour to his justice.

II. *For the same reason he that despises the poor, does an injury to God who is his Creator.*

He dishonours his Providence ; he does not rescue him from the imputation of being blind and unjust in the distribution of the goods of this world. He does not accuse him of this on his own account, because he is satisfied with the distribution he has received ; but he accuses him through the mouth of the abandoned poor, whom he excites, by his want of feeling, to murmurs and complaints. Thus the blasphemies and imprecations of the poor, become the crimes of the rich.

JULY 5.

ON THE OBLIGATION OF ALMS-GIVING.

I. *It is a real debt annexed to the possession of riches.*

This is the name which it receives in the Scriptures—"Pay thy debt." *Redde*

debitum tuum. A refusal to pay it is a proof of fraud and injustice. "Do not rob the poor of his alms;" and observe that the Holy Ghost does not call it the alms of the rich, but the alms of the poor, because they belong more to the poor who receive than to the rich who give them. Do not, therefore, look upon the poor as unfortunates, who have recourse to your charity and compassion; consider them as rightful creditors who seek for the payment of a debt that is due to them.

II. *Most rich people falsely imagine that the alms which they bestow is on their part a pure liberality.*

It is on this false principle that they believe themselves justified in giving a refusal according as they please. It is on this false principle that they think they are dispensed every year from setting aside their superfluities for the use of the poor. It is their lot to be poor, they say, as it is mine to be rich. It is true that it is their lot to be poor, but it is not their lot to be abandoned in their poverty:

it is their lot to implore your relief because they are in want ; and it is your duty to succour them because you are in abundance.

JULY 6.

ON CHARITY TO THE POOR.

I. *It ought to extend to all the poor whom we are able to relieve.*

For at the last judgment Jesus Christ will say to the reprobate :—"Go, ye cursed, into eternal fire ; because," he will add, "what you have not done for the smallest of my little ones, that is, for the smallest of the poor, you have not done for me." I cannot, therefore, abandon a single poor person without relieving him, if it be in my power ; and whether it be or not, is to be determined by the rules of Christian prudence. If I fail to do so, Jesus Christ will tell me at the last day :—"By not having had charity for this poor person, you had no charity for me."

II. It should be attentive and vigilant.

Observe, that Jesus Christ has not said
—because you have positively refused;
but—because you have neglected charity.
—Hence, if under my eyes, or any place
where I may happen to be, I hear of a poor
person, and unhappy fellow-creature who
is perishing for want, and if instead of
relieving him, I spend my time and my
wealth on the vain amusements of the
world, Jesus Christ will produce him be-
fore me at the day of judgment, and will
say to me—“What you have not done for
this unhappy person, you have not done
for me. You suffered him to languish in
hunger and misery, although you might
have known his wants and relieved them.
It is I whom you have abandoned.”

JULY 7.

ON THE HARDHEARTEDNESS OF THE RICH
TOWARDS THE POOR.

*I. They are afraid of either seeing or
knowing them.*

The horror which they have of poverty is reflected on the poor. They believe themselves dishonoured by holding a communication with a man like themselves, because he happens to be in misery. The very sight of the mournful effects of poverty is revolting to their delicacy. They fear lest their conscience might reproach them for their want of feeling, and remind them of their obligations. They are like those profligate debtors, who imagine they owe nothing, as long as they can avoid the sight of their creditors.

II. *They refuse to succour them.*

All I possess, they say, is little enough to support me in my condition: I have nothing but what is barely necessary. But, 1st, Is it right for them to say—*my* goods, *my* lands, *my* revenues? No; because they can call nothing theirs until they have surrendered to the poor that superfluity which belongs to them. 2d, What are those *necessaries* of which they speak? Are they the necessaries of their state of

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THE RICH

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life? God does not require this from them. It is, therefore, what is necessary for play, for amusements, for sensuality, for ambition or for avarice; but these pretended *necessaries* are real *superfluities* which belong to the poor.

JULY 8.

ON A PASSION FOR EXTRAVAGANCE.

I. *This passion is very common and very dangerous.*

It is the source of a thousand disorders; it renders those who are ruled by it, insensible to the wants of the poor. It brings trouble and disunion into the bosom of families; it arms fathers against their children, and children against their parents; it separates man and wife; it opens an abyss of debts which nothing will be able to fill; it destroys without resource, the fortune of worldlings in this life, and their salvation in the next.

II. *In order to subdue this passion, a Christian should limit himself to what is*

only absolutely necessary for his life and rank.

“Both are the work of God,” says St. Augustine; he wishes that his work should be preserved, and, consequently, that you should preserve your life, and maintain your condition; but this immoderate luxury which exceeds the wants both of condition and life, is not ordained of God; it springs only from the disorders of your passion. Confine yourself, then, to what is necessary for supporting the work of God, and retrench every thing that tends to support the work of the devil.

JULY 9.

ON THE MEANS OF KNOWING THE SUPERFLUOUS, AND OF DISTINGUISHING THE NECESSARY.

I. You will never have an exact knowledge of it if you consult your passions.

For if it be left to their decision, the more passions you have to satisfy, the less

you will be obliged to be charitable. An inconsiderate youth, breathes nothing but a love of pleasure:—"His age," says St. Augustine, "is, in truth, the flower of life, but it is, at the same time, the most dangerous period to reason and virtue. *Flos ætatis, periculum mentis*:" a profane and dissipated world—its excesses warn you how insecure you will be in following its maxims.

II. *To form a just idea of your superfluities, you must consult the gospel which prohibits an immoderate use of earthly goods to the rich as well as the poor.*

The reasonable and virtuous world:—there are in every state faithful adorers, whose conduct may serve you as a model; compare their wealth with yours; see what they look upon as a superfluity, and follow in proportion the same rule and measure.—Did not Lazarus point out to the rich glutton a superfluity which he abused when he craved to be fed by the crumbs that fell from his table?

JULY 10.

ON THE BADNESS OF THE TIMES.

I. *Wars which desolate provinces and despoil kingdoms of men and money—diseases which depopulate the earth—the barrenness of the fields which reduce an entire people to misery—this is what is called the badness of the times.*

Now, the rich of the world are always those who suffer least, and yet this unhappy class make use of it as a pretext for not giving alms. They dry up the source of their charities, but they set no limits to their extravagant luxury and expenses. They pretend, therefore, that the poor alone should bear the weight of the public misery, and they believe they are justified in withholding the relief which they owe them, at a time when they most stand in need of relief.

II. *It is the rich who ought to suffer most in bad times :*

For it is the rich who produce them by

their sins ; it is upon them God looks with eyes of indignation. The poor only excite his compassion. The rich should, therefore, look upon themselves as the cause of those terrible scourges, which are sent only to punish them. If only the poor were to feel their severity, it would follow, that in sending these scourges on the earth he intended they should fall on the miserable alone.

JULY 11.

ON THE DUTIES OF THE RICH IN TIMES OF
PUBLIC CALAMITY.

I. *Their duty towards God is to appease his anger by repentance.*

It was thus the Judiths, the Esthers, the Davids, and the Mordechais acted, when the Lord poured out on his people the viol of his wrath. "We have sinned," said they, "we have acted unjustly ; let us humble ourselves, let us punish our rebellious and impenitent flesh by sack-

cloth and fasting ; let us return to the law of God which we have abandoned."

II. *Their duty towards the poor is to relieve them by alms.*

Is it not just that mercy and charity should increase in proportion as misery is multiplied ? Ought the poor be the most neglected because they are the most unfortunate ? Upon what ground shall you be entirely exempt from the punishments and chastisements which are heaped on your brethren ? Does not religion, then, oblige you to consider superfluous, what at other times would seem necessary expenses ? Can any one doubt that the pious excess of charity becomes, on such occasions, the law of justice and humanity ?

JULY 12.

ON LIBERALITY.

I. *He who is satisfied with giving his superfluities to the poor, has not the merit of a generous and liberal charity.*

He may obtain merit in the eyes of worldlings, who know nothing of superfluity, and in whose sight any alms that have the appearance of being considerable, seem prodigious liberalities; he may even have merit in the eyes of the poor, who do not always know the extent of their own rights, because they are often ignorant of the degree to which the superfluity of the rich extends. But he will not acquire this singular and superabundant merit in the eyes of the Lord, because in paying precisely what he owes, he gives in reality what does not belong to him.

II. *Most of the saints had the merit of a liberal and generous charity:*

Because their alms were regulated not alone by what was necessary to maintain their condition, but sometimes on what was necessary to support their own life. Such was the alms of the poor widow, of whom mention is made in the gospel, who cast but two small pieces of coin

into the treasury of the poor. All others, said Jesus Christ, have given their superfluity, but this woman has given all that she possessed, all that remained to her to support life.

JULY 13.

ON THE PRAYERS OF THE POOR.

I. *They are efficacious before God, when they pray for the happiness and salvation of the charitable Christian.*

“Do not despise the poor,” said St. Gregory of Nyssa; “their friendship is precious, and deserves to be sought after. The Saviour said: make yourselves friends of riches which are always either the fruit or the seed of injustice, in order, that when you fail they may receive you into eternal tabernacles: Words which suppose that the poor hold the keys of heaven in their hands, and that the salvation of the rich, in some manner, depends on their solicitations and prayers. Their hands, it is true, are

weak and useless on earth, but they are very strong and powerful when they present to the Lord those gifts which we have bestowed them.

II. *The personal vices of the poor do not render their prayers useless in behalf of those who relieve them.*

Do you not think that in that crowd of poor people who surrounded the coffin of the virtuous Tabitha, there were some like the poor of the present day? Nevertheless, St. Peter, moved by the desolation of these poor people, who had just lost their parent, begs that she may be restored to life, and his prayer was heard. Had not the very tears of those poor people as great a share in the resurrection as, perhaps, the prayers of the apostle?

JULY 14.

ON THE CARE WHICH PARENTS SHOULD TAKE TO REAR UP, AND PROVIDE FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

I. *They often make this a pretext to excuse themselves from giving alms.*

But this care never seems to weigh heavily upon their minds except when you speak to them of relieving the poor; they never think of it, when their amusements or pleasures are concerned. Do not those unhappy children every day behold the fairest portion of their patrimony wasted by the luxury of a prodigal and dissipated father? Do they not behold, with sorrow, their advancement retarded and their education neglected by a thousand foolish expenses? And, yet, if you speak to those very fathers about the precepts of almsgiving, they will talk in the loudest strain of the obligations with respect to their children, which the natural and divine law prescribe.

II. It is luxury alone and not paternal affection, which prevents them from relieving the poor.

"And what proves it," said St. Augustine to them, "is, that if one of your children happens to be taken away by death, how will you act? If it was to

enrich this child, that you treasured up a part of your property, why do you not give it to the poor when you have lost him? Behold you are free, you are disengaged from all the duties which bound you in reference to him, why then still retain that portion of inheritance which was destined for him? Why do you not send to heaven after him, that which you kept only for his use?"

JULY 15.

ON THE PREFERENCE WHICH A CHRISTIAN SHOULD
GIVE TO GOD AND HIS SALVATION, BEFORE
ANY OTHER OBJECT.

I. *With regard to God.*

He tells us himself, "he who loves his son or his daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Hence, even paternal love, though natural and indispensable, has its due limits. It is limited by the love which we owe to God, and to which all other loves should be subordinate. It is limited by the commandments and

laws of God. Behold the barriers where it ought to stop, for as soon as it passes them, it necessarily becomes inordinate and criminal.

II. *With regard to our salvation.*

This is the greatest and most important of our interests; and, if we fear that our children may not one day be rich enough for the present life, we ought to fear still more, lest ourselves may be despoiled of virtues and merits for the future. If prudence does not permit a parent to surrender all his property to his children, to establish them in the world, it allows him still less to sacrifice the salvation of his soul for their elevation and fortune.

JULY 16.

ON THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN.

I. *It is not sufficient to prepare them for the world.*

It is still more important to educate and form them for heaven: 1st, by fre-

quent and solid instructions ; 2d, by good example, without which the best instructions will be fruitless and unavailing. And what example do you give them, when they see you constantly occupied only with the false goods of the world, and violating all the rules of the gospel to satisfy a thousand objects of ambition or vanity ? How can you inspire them with any sentiments of religion, if they do not see you practise it ?

II. *What are the instructions that should be more particularly given them ?*

They are included in these words which the Holy Ghost has addressed to all parents :—"Take care to make your children know the holy ordinances of the Lord, in order that they may place all their confidence in him ; teach them never to forget the wonders he has wrought for your fathers, and to think of nothing both day and night but of his law and the manner in which they should observe it." These are the goods which they should

principally leave them; these are the treasures which they should particularly endeavour to make them acquire. No matter what fortune you may leave after your death, the love and fear of God will always form the chief part of their inheritance, as well as charity, justice, the prayers of the poor, and the blessings of heaven, which are the almost infallible result of those prayers.

JULY 17.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF PRACTISING ALMS-DEEDS.

I. *God puts himself in the place of him who gives alms.*

A charitable Christian is, in the spirit of religion, not only a man who relieves his fellow-creature, but a man who holds the place of God himself, of this infinitely merciful Being who lives to display his power only by his benefits. To give alms is, therefore, to be the substitute and co-operator of God, even with regard to the

poor A charitable Christian is, as it were, a kind of divinity, who produces sudden and unforeseen changes in the soul and condition of the miserable.

II. *God puts himself in the place of him who receives the alms.*

A poor man is, in the eyes of religion, not only a portion of suffering and afflicted humanity, but also a member of Jesus Christ who suffers; he is Jesus Christ in person, who asks us for assistance and relief. If you knew who it is that asks you for a drop of water to allay his thirst, said the Saviour, at one time, to the Samaritan woman: *Si scires donum Dei, et quis est qui tibi dicit: da mihi bibere.* You know who it is, O Christian! you know that it is Jesus Christ himself that applies to you in the person of this poor individual: and will you be so barbarous, so ungrateful, so impious, as to refuse him what he asks you, and what you can so easily give?

JULY 18.

ON THE ABUSES OF AVARICE AND LIBERALITY.

I. *What constitutes the principal misfortune of the rich, says a holy Father, is, that they constantly sin from avarice and liberality.*

If you consider the use which they make of their riches, you will perceive that they carry their liberality to an excess, when they ought to be avaricious; that they give every thing to pleasure, and nothing to charity and duty; that they husband nothing; that they spare or regret no expense when they wish to make a pompous display of their wealth in the eyes of the world; that they throw handfuls of gold and silver on the gaming table, and profusely reward those flatterers who offer incense to their vices, only that they may share in their fortune. Now, it is in these cases that the duty of a Christian obliges him to be even avaricious.

II. *They are avaricious to an excess when they ought to be liberal.*

When you solicit them in behalf of the poor, they close their hands; they complain of the most trivial expenses; it is with difficulty that any alms is obtained from them, and even frequently it is not possible to obtain it. Now, it is precisely in these cases that a Christian ought to be liberal.

JULY 19.

ON THE SACRIFICE WHICH WE OFFER TO GOD
BY ALMSGIVING.

I. *The name of sacrifice is not exclusively applied in Scripture to the oblation of the victims that were immolated in the temple of Jerusalem.*

Every thing that we offer to God, every thing that we do to please and obey him, is there called a sacrifice. It bestows this name on prayer, which is an application of our spirit to God. It gives it to fasting and abstinence, by which we mortify our

flesh to appease the wrath of God. In fine, it gives it to alms, by which we sacrifice to God a part of those goods we have received from him, to be employed in relieving the poor.

II. *Of all those sacrifices, that of alms is the most agreeable to God.*

“What have I to do with your victims and your prayers?” said he to his people, by the Prophet Isaias. “What I desire is, that you relieve the indigent, and succour the orphan. What will it profit you to punish your body by fasting? The fast that pleases me is, that you break your bread with the poor man, and that you respect in him your own flesh. In one word, I wish for mercy rather than sacrifice. *Misericordiam volo et non sacrificium.* And if you be not merciful and charitable, every thing you offer me, every thing you do for me, will be of no value in my sight.”

JULY 20.

ON THE MURMURS OF THE POOR AGAINST
THE RICH.

I. *These murmurs render the poor very culpable in the sight of God.*

Because, 1st, they are obliged to suffer, without murmuring, the afflictions which God sends them. 2d, By murmuring they lose the inestimable merit of their sufferings. 3d, They violate the laws of Christian charity with regard to the rich, whilst they unceasingly cry out that they should be observed towards themselves. 4th, Their poverty likens them to Jesus Christ, and they disdain this happy resemblance; they renounce it by their impatience.

II. *These murmurs will not fail to draw down the anger of God on the rich.*

He will punish the poor for having murmured, and the rich for having occasioned their murmurs. The curse which the poor man shall utter against them in

the bitterness of his soul, will ascend even to the throne of God, and will be there heard, because he is the creature and the work of God. It is the wise man who assures us of this.

JULY 21.

ON THE REPROACHES OF THE RICH AGAINST
THE POOR.

1. *They reproach them with their idleness, their sloth, and their impositions.*

But these reproaches are not always true. Is it then so difficult to find persons who are really poor, really sick, and really miserable? Are all those who call themselves poor, impostors? Or has Jesus Christ left us a command which can be applied to no one? How many captives are in chains, who wait in vain for charity to deliver them? How many abandoned orphans to whom the rich ought to be as parents? Where does not one find that countless multitude of blind and lame, and paralytic, who surrounded the sheep-pond at Jerusalem?

II. *The rich ought to apply to themselves the reproaches which they urge against the poor.*

“These are idle and lazy wretches,” they say, “who could live by their labour, but who make a trade of their misery.” But what use do the rich make of their strength and their time? Can any thing be more useless than *their* life? Is it not all spent in doing nothing, or in doing things that are next to nothing? They reproach the poor for their artifices and impostures; but what artifices and impostures do they not practise themselves to gain favours and graces? Do they not affect to be poorer than they are? Do they not often say, they are threatened with absolute ruin unless the insatiable desires of their ambition be complied with?

JULY 22.

ON THE CHARITY OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

I. *They had no poor amongst them.*

Not because they were all equally rich ; but because all the poor were equally relieved. The charity of the Master had so deeply entered into the soul of his disciples, that all their goods were in common, and they had but one heart and one soul. It was by this universal, generous, and superabundant charity, that the Christians were recognised. Times and customs have changed ; the number of the poor is so great with us, that we are surcharged with them.

II. *Whence arises this difference ?*

It is, because in those happy ages—
1st, The poor themselves were charitable, whilst in these days the rich are cruel.
2d, Those Christians were all sober and moderate, and we have become intemperate and proud. 3d, They had no ambition but for heaven, whilst we have it only for the earth. 4th, Their moderate living created the riches of the poor, and our luxury and extravagance cause their

misery. When our charity shall be enlivened, this equality will be soon restored.

JULY 23.

ON THE TRANQUILLITY OF A CHARITABLE CHRISTIAN AT THE HOUR OF DEATH.

I. *Death presents itself to our mind under two frightful aspects :*

As an universal shipwreck which will swallow up our bodies, our wealth, our dignities, and our pleasures. We have brought nothing into the world, and we will bring nothing out. But this aspect has no terrors for a charitable Christian. He has anticipated death by stripping himself of a great portion of his goods, in favour of the poor; he has given to charity what might have been the food of avarice, or rather he has not deprived himself of any thing by his alms. He has sent his riches before him; he has by his charities transported his goods before him into the other life, and he is

just going to take possession of them in heaven.

II. *Death presents itself to our mind as the moment of a severe and rigorous examination of our life, which will decide our eternal lot.*

"It is appointed for all men to die once," says the Apostle, "and after death, judgment." But this judgment, far from being formidable to the charitable Christian, becomes rather the source of his consolations, and the foundation of his hope. He does not fear to hear his master say—"Render an account of thy stewardship: What has become of the talents which I entrusted to your care? What use have you made of them?" The poor will answer for him.

JULY 24.

ON THE ALMS OF SINNERS.

I. *They will not serve to efface their sins if they persevere in them.*

For it cannot be supposed that a sinner

could ever purchase by his alms the right of persevering in his disorders. If such a traffic were allowed, it would follow that the rich have greater means and more facilities for salvation than the poor.

II. *Nevertheless, alms have a particular virtue in obtaining from heaven those graces that are necessary for the sinner's conversion.*

It is in this sense it is said:—"Redeem your sins with alms.—Charity covereth a multitude of sins.—Give, and it shall be given unto you.—Give alms out of your superfluities, and you shall become entirely pure." Thus, the centurion mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, obtained from heaven the grace of faith, "because he gave much alms to the people, and prayed continually to God."—An angel from heaven came to tell him:—"Your prayers and your alms have ascended even unto God, and he is mindful of them." How many rich persons who are tied down by criminal habits in the

chains of iniquity, might obtain the grace of conversion by the same means !

JULY 25.

ON RESTITUTION.

I. There are very few rich persons in the world, who are not obliged to make great restitution.

They dispose of the goods of others with as much ease as if they belonged to themselves. They make no scruple of accumulating debts without knowing whether they shall be ever able to discharge them. They do not reflect that religion and justice oblige them to restore those goods which they abuse, to their lawful owner ; and in case they cannot find him, to restore them to God, by giving them to the poor.

II. Alms will never suffice for restitution, nor restitution for alms.

By restitution we merely give back what essentially belongs to another, but alms should be given from what belongs

to ourselves. "There are some," says St. Chrysostom, "who wish to give in charity what they have acquired by fraud and violence, but there is a great difference in performing works of mercy, to expiate our sins, and in committing sins in order that we may afterwards perform works of mercy." He that makes restitution is still obliged to give alms, and he who gives alms, if he have the property of another, is still obliged to restore it. Thus, the celebrated Zacheus accomplished all justice when he said to Jesus Christ: "Lord, I give half my property to the poor, and if I have defrauded any one, I return him four times as much."

JULY 26.

ON THE EXCELLENCE OF CHARITY.

I. *It is the greatest of all virtues—the only one which will never have an end.*

All others are founded on our misery and imperfection; and we should not look upon them as real goods, because they

serve only as a remedy for our evils. Faith supposes our ignorance ; hope is a sign of our wants ; prayer is an avowal of our weakness ; patience is a proof of our afflictions ; and penance bears an essential relation to our sins. All those virtues, therefore, will be banished from heaven, because every thing that savours of the weakness and imperfection of humanity, is always excluded from it.

II. *Charity alone will follow us to heaven.*

We there possess a God who is charity itself. It is there that Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and our Head, is re-united with all his members by the indissoluble links of an eternal love. It is there that God is pleased to satiate the desires of those blessed souls with whom he shares his felicity and glory. It is there, in fine, that charity reigns, and produces, in the hearts of all, a peace and bliss which will never end.

JULY 27.

ON THE ORDER THAT SHOULD BE OBSERVED IN
ALMS-GIVING.

I. *Alms should be given with choice, with discernment, and with measure.*

With choice: by preferring our neighbours and domestics, if they be really in want, before strangers. With discernment: by giving alms rather to those who are utterly incapable of providing for themselves, than to those who may still, by their labour, relieve their own necessities. With measure: by avoiding to give too much to some, and thereby putting it out of our power to relieve others.

II. *If it unfortunately happen that we are deceived in the choice of the poor whom we relieve, provided it does not arise from any want of inquiry and diligence, we will not thereby lose the merit of our charity.*

When I relieve a man in poverty, his nature itself, and not the character of his

morals, is the object of my compassion. He may be, if you will, a cheat and an impostor, who defrauds the real poor of the alms that are their due. I am ignorant of this, and it was not possible for me to be exactly informed about it. He, therefore, will not deprive me of the reward of my charity. He will be punished, it is true, for having usurped an alms which he did not deserve; but I will be rewarded for having given it to him.

JULY 28.

ON TRANSIENT DEVOTIONS.

I. *That devotion is called transient which is the growth of circumstances and occasions, but does not flourish for any time.*

We will acknowledge, we will even weep for the disorders of our life; but after some interval of devotion we resume our ordinary course, and return to the same sins. We promise God to renounce them, and we promise with sincerity: but we have not the courage to

remain firm in our resolution. The heart is grieved for a time, but it is not changed. This kind of devotion is generally owing to some unforeseen calamity, or to some religious solemnity, or to the approach of death. But as it is not solid nor rooted in the heart, it vanishes suddenly, with the causes and occasions which produced it.

II. *The illusions of transient devotions.*

Reflect that if your devotion has vanished, the truths on which it was founded, and which rendered it necessary, always subsist. The judgments of God are not the less terrible because you have ceased to think of them as much as you were wont. Do you wish to be like children who, in order to escape the sight of those who pursue them, close their eyes, and then imagine that they are not seen any longer?

JULY 29.

ON HUMILITY.

I. *Christian humility is not a base and despicable virtue which is incompatible with greatness of soul.*

In order to be convinced of this, we should form a just and precise notion of what humility is. It holds, like other virtues, a middle place between two contrary vices—pride, and weakness of heart and spirit which is called pusillanimity; pride, which thinks itself worthy of all, and capable of every thing; and pusillanimity, which is fit for nothing. To fall into pusillanimity in order to avoid pride, would be the same excess as to become avaricious in order to avoid prodigality.

II. *We may practise humility in the world.*

By not running after the honours of the world, like the ambitious. By enduring with patience, that others should be pre-

ferred before us in the distribution of the favours of the world. By serving as faithful when we are obscure and forgotten, as if we were surrounded by the glories and honours of the world.

JULY 30.

ON THE HUMILITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. "*Learn of me,*" he says to us, "*because I am meek and humble of heart.*"

St. Augustine remarks, that he does not say to us:—"Learn of me to work miracles, to give sight to the blind, or to raise the dead to life; because a solid humility is a more certain and more efficacious means of pleasing God, than an elevation which would expose you to pride. What, O Lord!" adds the same Father, "are all the treasures of your knowledge and wisdom confined to teaching us this simple lesson—"that you are meek and humble of heart?" Is humility so rare and so difficult a virtue that we could learn it only through you? Yes;

men alone could never attain it; it was necessary that a God should come and show them an example of humility, because nothing is so deeply rooted in their heart as pride."

II. *The whole life of Jesus Christ was but a continual exercise of humility.*

He would be born of a poor mother, in a stable, and in a crib; he would be circumcised, and baptized like a sinner; he fled into Egypt like a person who was weak and unprotected.—When the people followed him to make him a king, he concealed himself. At the close of his life he humbled himself even to the washing of his disciples' feet, and he crowned so many great examples by his ignominious death on the cross. "But why, O Lord," cries out St. Bernard, "so many humiliations for so great a majesty? It was that after this example no person should dare to glorify himself on the earth."

JULY 31.

ON THE NECESSITY OF BEING HUMBLE IN ORDER
TO PLEASE GOD.

I. *Nothing pleases God without humility.*

It is, therefore, necessary that this virtue should precede, accompany, and follow all our actions, because the moment pride is mixed up with them, it destroys their merit; moreover, we should fear this pride in proportion as we have merit and virtue; for culpable actions are the source of other vices, and the most praiseworthy are the food of pride; other vices are linked only with disorder and shame, whilst this attaches itself but to glory and to virtues.

II. *Every thing infected with the leaven of pride is displeasing to God.*

If a faithful Christian, who has made great progress in piety, admits into his heart a sentiment of pride, a desire of pleasing men, and of gaining their esteem, a secret complacency in his own

merit, he loses, in a moment, all the fruit of his past labours; he unhappily runs aground in the middle of his course, and all his virtue is dashed to pieces against this rock. St. Bernard compares a man who accumulates virtues, without humility, to a person carrying dust against the wind; the first blast will scatter it all. Whatever merit you may have acquired, always remember that "God resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble."

AUGUST 1.

ON THE RELATION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN HUMILITY AND THE OTHER VIRTUES.

I. *Faith, hope, and charity, which include our principal duties to God, are sustained only by humility.*

Faith enlightens humble, docile, and submissive spirits, whilst pride obscures or rejects all its lights, according to this text:—"Thou hast concealed these mysteries from the wise and the prudent of the world, and thou hast revealed them

to the humble!" Hope is the resource and consolation of the humble, who distrust themselves, and place all their confidence in God. Charity which consists in loving God, is equally the portion of the humble who know that every thing they possess comes from him, and that they subsist only by his bounty.

II. *Humility is also the support of those other virtues which include our duty to our neighbour.*

"There have been always dissensions and complaints amongst the proud," says the wise man; they complain of every thing; nothing is suited to their fancy; they seek each other only to destroy and tear each other asunder. The humble, on the contrary, are satisfied with every thing; they complain of nothing; they do not seek after distinctions or preferences; they always imagine that they are treated more favourably than they deserve, and by this means they preserve

peace with God, with their neighbour.
and with themselves.

AUGUST 2.

ON TRUE HUMILITY.

I. *It does not consist in the exterior, or in words.*

"It is easy," says St. Jerome, to "bend the head, to incline the eyes, and to call one's self a sinner; but how often is not pride concealed under these deceitful appearances!" There are some, says the wise man, who pretend to be humble, but their interior is full of deceit and fraud; they are serpents who creep on the earth, but if you touch them ever so slightly, even inadvertently, they are immediately swollen with rage and fury; their eyes sparkle, their wrath is enkindled, and they will give you a mortal wound for a blow which has not even injured them.

II. *Interior sentiments form true humility.*

To despise ourselves outwardly, and to

speaking evil of ourselves, is not humility ; but to suffer patiently the injuries and contempt of others, is genuine humility.

AUGUST 3.

ON THE MISERY OF MAN.

I. *What is man ? asks St. Chrysostom.*

He is born only to die ; he is inflated and puffed up, and he has but a few moments to live ; we lose sight of him in the duration of ages. Six thousand years have rolled on without his having existed, and a great number will elapse after he shall have ceased to live. Never content with his lot, though he is satisfied enough to be proud, he makes constant exertions to ascend higher, and before he has had time to grow important, according to his ambition, he dies and is trampled under foot. He is boasted of and admired to-day ; he will be mourned to-morrow, and, perhaps, no one would wish to take the trouble of weeping for or bemoaning him the week after.

II. *What is a sinful man?*

Can there be any thing inferior to nothingness? Yes, undoubtedly, since there is sin, which man by the disorder of his will adds to that nothingness which is peculiar to him; sin is worse than non-entity, for it would be better not to exist than to sin. —“It would have been better for him, that he was never born,” said the Saviour, speaking of the traitor Judas. To what degree of abasement, therefore, can the sinner be reduced, that will not be infinitely above his deserts?

AUGUST 4.

ON THE IGNORANCE OF MAN WITH REGARD
TO THE STATE OF GRACE.

I. *We know for certain that we have offended God, but we do not know, with certainty, whether God has forgiven us.*

“No one knows,” says the wise man, “whether he is worthy of love or hatred.”
“My conscience reproaches me with nothing,” says the apostle, “yet I am not

thereby justified. Though I should speak the language of men and angels, and have not charity, I am nothing."—But who will assure me that I have this divine charity in my heart, when St. Paul himself was not assured of it?—And if the testimony of a conscience so pure and elevated as his was not sufficient to allay his fears, how can I derive, from the testimony of mine, an assurance which he had not?

II. This ignorance is a certain means of preserving us always in humility.

Who will dare to walk with uplifted head? Who will not be filled with confusion and fear? Who will not be humbled to the very centre of the earth in so strange an uncertainty? "God wished," says St. Gregory, "that we should not be assured of grace in order to keep us always humble." This uncertainty was necessary to prevent us from despising our neighbour for any sin that he may commit.

AUGUST 5.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES.

I. *If in order to know yourself you consult only your self-love :*

You will never behold yourself except on the side most favourable to vanity, and you will entirely lose sight of the faults which would humble you. If you consult religion, you will see that there is nothing in you but what is evil, and you will have constantly before your eyes the advantages of which you are deficient.

II. *Reflect on the consequences of considering yourself in those different manners.*

The sight of your faults preserves and maintains in your soul the advantages which it possesses ; and the consideration of the advantages which you think you possess, makes you lose them through pride. Make, therefore, what is deficient in you redound to your profit, and do not abuse any good you possess so as to convert it into an evil.

AUGUST 6.

ON THE ARTIFICES OF PRIDE.

I. *It often conceals itself under the appearance of humility.*

We speak of ourselves with modesty, to induce others to speak of us with praise ; we even speak ill of ourselves, in order that others may speak well of us ; we magnify our own defects, in order that others may apologise for them ; we affect not to know our good qualities, in order that, besides their possession, we may have the glory of being ignorant of them.

II. *Baseness and vanity of those artifices.*

“To seek to acquire by humility the praise of being humble, is not a virtue,” says St. Bernard, “but the destruction of virtue.” We seek by this means to deceive others, and we deceive ourselves ; we fancy that we are engaging the esteem of men, whilst we are exciting only their contempt. They know as well as you,

and perhaps better than you, the schemes and stratagems of pride, and they form their judgment on what they know themselves to be capable of doing, to gratify their pride. False and hypocritical humility will render you more contemptible in their eyes than a candid vanity which will openly display itself.

AUGUST 7.

ON THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN HUMILITY.

I. *The occasions of practising this virtue are not rare.*

They occur every day in the world. It will happen that every thing which relates to the satisfaction of others will succeed according to their wishes; and that every thing which relates to yours will fail. Others will be heard with admiration; they will on all occasions receive marks of esteem, and you will be passed over as a person of no importance. They will easily obtain whatever they ask, and every thing will be refused to you; they

will be sought after with eagerness, whilst you shall be left forgotten ; they will be applied to in all affairs, whilst you will be looked on as quite useless. All these are so many occasions on which you may practise Christian humility.

II. *But we seldom take advantage of them.*

How do worldlings comport themselves when they are commanded to do any thing with imperiousness or ill humour, when their pretensions are opposed, or when events do not succeed according to their expectations ? How do they receive the advices which are given them, or the reprimands that are made them ?—They are elated, they are vexed, they are chagrined, they are dejected. Would they not be more tranquil and more happy if they were more humble ?

AUGUST 8.

ON THE HUMILITY OF THE SAINTS.

I. *It appears excessive to us.*

Because they considered themselves the greatest sinners, although they were raised to the height of sanctity. But they had great reason to think so ; for if they were not great sinners by their will, they were by their weakness, since there is no crime, however enormous, which is committed by man, that any other man is not capable of committing, if God abandoned him to himself. We walk on the brink of an abyss, and are always ready to fall in, if God did not stretch forth his hand to us. We should all, then, consider ourselves as sinners, because, in reality, we are nothing of ourselves but sinners ; and we would become such every moment if the Lord did not sustain us by his grace.

II. *They justly thought that no one should prefer himself to another in the order of grace, because this order is hidden from us.*

How do you know but he whom you look on as a great sinner will become immediately more just than you? or how do you know but he is always so in the sight of God? How do you know what God may have operated in this soul since yesterday, or even during the last moment? For the wise man says, "it is easy for God to enrich the poor man in an instant." He has only to cast an eye of mercy on him to do so. He could even from the very stones raise up children to Abraham; of a publican and a persecutor of his Church he could make an apostle and a preacher of his name. He has only to call, as he did St. Matthew; to throw down, strike to the earth, as he did St. Paul; to change the heart, as he did that of Magdalene.

AUGUST 9.

ON GREATNESS OF SOUL.

I. *This quality is suitable to those who hold elevated stations and eminent dignities in the world; because it prompts them to undertake great and glorious things.*

This quality is by no means incompatible with Christian humility; for "an humble man attempts great undertakings with a distrust in himself, and a confidence in God;" two sentiments which are peculiar to humility. He is convinced that he can do nothing of himself; but that he can do every thing with the assistance of God. Those who hope in the Lord, says the Prophet Isaias, shall change strength; because they will turn the powers of heaven against the powers of earth, and their arm against the arm of the Lord. It was this that made St. Leo say, that "nothing is impossible to the humble, because they place all their confidence in him who can do every thing."

II. *With regard to the glory of great enterprises, humility suffers and admits it, because it refers all to God.*

The humble man desires not enjoyment: he wishes only for merit: he makes no account of the honours of the world; he soars much higher. It is solely in order to please his God, and to practise the virtues proper for his state, that he is induced to perform great actions. No other motive has any influence on his heart; he would not deign to be influenced by it.

AUGUST 10.

ON THE AMUSEMENTS OF THE WORLD.

I. *There are amusements which are allowed.*

Such as those which may be considered—1st, lawful relaxations after past labours. 2d, Dispositions and preparations for future labours. Amusements, then, are allowed, only inasmuch as they are necessary. Behold the measure of them.

Every thing that goes beyond that, every amusement that becomes in itself a constant and habitual occupation, which has not been preceded, and which will not and cannot be followed by any kind of labour, is contrary to the designs of God, and, of course, forbidden.

II. *Even lawful amusements frequently become criminal by their excess.*

Every excess is a vice ; and even virtue itself, which is the regulation of all good, becomes culpable when it is in extremes. —“ We should be wise,” says the apostle ; “ but we should be wise unto sobriety ; and he who desires to be too wise is not wise at all, because wisdom is essentially a state of reason, and consequently of moderation.” But if, in order to be wise, we must be so without excess, with how much more reason must we avoid it in order to amuse ourselves with wisdom ! Now, who is there that avoids excess even in lawful amusements ?

AUGUST 11.

ON THE RULES WE SHOULD FOLLOW WITH
REGARD TO LAWFUL AMUSEMENTS.

I. *The true Christian employs in them only that rest and leisure which God has not refused to nature, and which our weakness has rendered necessary.*

But he has not recourse to this distraction until after he has given all the time that is necessary—1st, to the service of God and the practices of religion, such as prayer, the sacrifice of the altar, works of mercy and charity, pious reading, every thing, in fine, that serves to increase his piety; 2d, to the care of his family and his personal affairs; 3d, to the particular duties of his state, and the obligations of his office.

II. *Advantages of this conduct.*

He who allows himself limited and proper amusement only, after having satisfied all his obligations, has not to reproach himself with the loss of his

time, or the worthlessness of his life; his amusements will be to him only necessary distractions, and not suspicious, dangerous and criminal occupations, or at least occupations that are fruitless so far as salvation is concerned, and which make the greater part of worldlings often forget what they owe to God, to their neighbour, and to themselves.

AUGUST 12.

ON AMUSEMENTS TO WHICH ONE IS EXPOSED BY
HIS STATE.

I. *There are persons in the world to whom one is obliged by his state to render indispensable attentions and complaisance.*

These are frequently frivolous and trifling spirits, who know not how to occupy themselves, and who spend the greater part of their time in useless amusements. But if these amusements have nothing in them contrary to the law of God, and if one enters into them according to the rules of his state, he may and ought

to take a part in them with moderation, and with a reference to God.—You would like more useful occupations better, but God for your sake does not love them better, since he has connected you against your will with objects less solid. It is not any taste or passion that conducts you; it is duty: to you they are rather subjections than pleasures.

II. *He who acts for God, even in the most indifferent things, does not cease to perform the work of God.*

Many, in devoting themselves to God, think rather of filling up their life with certain difficult and extraordinary actions, than of purifying their intention and mortifying their self-will in the more ordinary actions of their state. But it would be often better, instead of changing the actions, to change the interior dispositions of the soul. God is not content with the motion of the lips, nor the humble posture of the body, nor with exterior ceremonies: what he chiefly requires is

a will pliant in his hands, which wills, without reserve, every thing that he wills, and which never desires under any pretext, not to have all his will accomplished.

AUGUST 13.

ON A PASSION FOR PLAY.

I. *This play which appears in itself so indifferent, often becomes a passion, and sometimes even a madness and a fury.*

With the greater part of worldlings it is no longer a simple amusement ; it is a constant and perpetual occupation ; it is a state, a profession, a traffic, it fills up all the hours of the night and day, except those that are devoted to eating and sleep. This play forms, if we may say so, the foundation and entertainment of their life. But if religion condemn every species of excess without distinction, who can doubt that the habitual state of a player by profession is an habitual state of sin.

II. *Consequence of this passion.*

They are, 1st, a total abandonment of

duty: one quits and renounces all to run after play. 2d, A squandering of means: our superfluities are first spent, and if the game tempt us, we hesitate not to sacrifice the very necessities of life. 3d, A derangement of affairs: in order to support play, we contract debts which accumulate to a great amount, and we miserably render ourselves unable to pay them. 4th, Vexations which rend the heart, although one affects, through politeness, to endure the greatest losses with all the appearance of tranquillity. Worldlings endeavour, in vain, to justify this passion, by saying that it is better to play than to be speaking evil of their neighbour. But this is a frivolous excuse, since we are never allowed to commit one sin in order to avoid another.

AUGUST 14.

ON THE CHOICE OF FRIENDS.

I. *A true Christian does not refuse to hold communication with any one ; but in bestowing his confidence he makes a selection, and acts with discernment.*

He does not refuse to hold communication with any one, because charity, which teaches him to look upon all men as his brethren, renders him mild, easy of access, and complaisant to all who approach him. But he does not bestow his confidence indiscriminately or imprudently, because he justly fears he may be seduced by the discourses and examples of those who follow maxims contrary to piety. It is this fear that ought to make the choice of his friends a matter of delicacy and difficulty.

II. *A true Christian proportions his confidence to the estimable qualities of those whose society he is obliged to frequent.*

It often happens that "the children of

the world are wiser and more enlightened in worldly affairs than the children of light." One may, therefore, consult and trust them on worldly matters, and even prefer their opinions to the advice of those who are more virtuous and disinterested. But never give them an entire and habitual confidence, which lays open your heart, and affords them an opportunity of penetrating it. The poison of the vices with which they are filled, would not fail to enter in along with them.

AUGUST 15.

ON THE DIFFERENT SENTIMENTS OF MEN WITH
REGARD TO TRUTH.

I. *Their contrariety is astonishing :*

For they will love truth and hate it ; they seek and avoid it ; they are delighted with it, and grieved by it. One time they embrace it with ardour ; at another they reject it with contempt.— Now they will triumph and boast for having known it, and again they will

consider it a humiliation, and wish to banish it for ever from their heart.

II. *These contrarieties are explained by the various interests of our passions and self-love.*

We love truth, we seek it, we desire it, we are transported at knowing it, when it is favourable to our vanity. But when it is the contrary, we avoid it, we detest it, we look upon it with horror; we would wish to be able to conceal it from the whole world, and even from ourselves. Remove this vanity; impose silence on this self-love which rules you, and your sentiments concerning truth will be always the same.

AUGUST 16.

ON THE LOVE OF TRUTH.

I. *What are the truths which we ought to love most?*

Those which disclose to us our errors and defects. We require to have them made known to us, because in our self-

love we all have a treacherous and corrupt judge, who conceals them from us, or transforms them into virtues. The greater part of those who surround us seem to be in league with this self-love; those useful truths are the very truths that they always find it most difficult to tell us, and endeavour to conceal from us, because they are bitter and disagreeable. Such persons will fear to wound our delicacy, and hence we ought to esteem and cherish him the more who has the courage to tell them to us.

II. *The stubborn truths to which we should in justice be more attached, are precisely those that we have the greatest dread of hearing.*

We avoid them; and although they force themselves upon our view in spite of us, we rise up against them; we are even exasperated with those who have the zeal and sincerity to disclose them to us, and what is most singular, we hate them for the very reason that ought to

make us love them, viz. *because they are truths*. We would be less offended if they were less true.

AUGUST 17.

ON THE FEAR OF TRUTH.

I. *What are the truths which we ought to dread most?*

Those which flatter us; because we call them truths although they have only the appearance of truth; and even if they had some truth in them, there is no truth which so nearly approaches to error, or which more surely leads into error. He that praises you deceives you, or, at least, he seeks to deceive you. He does not tell you what he thinks of you, but what he believes you think of yourself; he does not tell you what you are, but he tells you what you ought to be, and what you are not.

II. *The agreeable truths, which are often but flattering lies, are those that we love most.*

One desires to be praised, flattered, and admired ; and what is incomprehensible in this is, that he will protest, at the same time, that he does not wish to be deceived, that he hates nothing so much as lying and deceit, as if it were possible that the praises which are bestowed on us to seduce us, were always exempt from deceit or exaggeration. Solomon, on the contrary, preferred the bitterness of importunate but wholesome truths, to the sweet poison of flattery ; and had he never swerved from this maxim, he would, very likely, have always preserved his wisdom.

AUGUST 18.

ON THE OBLIGATION OF SPEAKING THE TRUTH.

I. *It is never told to those who have the greatest interest in knowing it.*

All the world prides itself on its sincerity ; but this sincerity is misplaced. Does not the knowledge of the world consist in carefully concealing disagreeable truths from those who are most

deeply interested in knowing them? Is it not thus always used with regard to the great, the rich, and the powerful of the world?—They are often ignorant of what is commonly and publicly known to the world; because a common interest unites all those who approach them, and makes them deceive them.

II. *The truth is freely told to those who have no right to know it, and no interest in hearing it.*

People are managed and kept on terms when they are present, and torn to pieces when they are absent. The true Christian acts differently; he has the courage to reprove individuals, and to apprise them of their faults; and he has the discretion never to speak ill of them in their absence.

AUGUST 19.

ON THE IDOLATRY OF SINNERS.

1. *What St. Paul says of avarice, which he calls idolatry, (avaritia, quæ est idolo-*

rum servitus,) may be equally said of other sins.

They all bear the character of idolatry, since the sinner transfers to vile creatures all the claims which God has on his love; he does not adore them, but he loves them; he does not offer them his incense, but he bestows them his heart. Now, it is in this heart that God ought to reign, and he will have no equal or associate in our love, as he has no equal or associate in his essence.

II. Compare the idolatry of sinners with that of Pagans.

You will find that the latter adore, it is true, insensible and inanimate idols, which render them no service; but which if left to themselves, without the corruption of man, can do no harm. On the other hand, sinners abandon the true God whom they know, to attach themselves to the idols of the flesh, the idols of avarice and ambition, which have frequently only power to injure them, and which render them miserable for time and eternity.

AUGUST 20.

ON IMAGINARY NECESSITIES.

I. *We hear people say every day—I am forced to lead such and such a life.*

My state, my situation, my disposition, my character, my connexions, and my habits, do not permit me to change it. But what necessity is there of your squandering so much in useless expenses? Would you be less happy with a little less pride? What necessity is there for your giving up so many hours of the day to dissipation, and devoting so few to the practices of religion and the labours prescribed by the duties of your state? Are you not at liberty to employ your time as you please, and could you not make a better use of it?

II. *These pretended necessities exist only because you have neither love for God, nor zeal for your salvation.*

Because you have too much attachment to the world, too much vanity, too

much ambition, too much eagerness for the pleasures and frivolous amusements of the world. "Take away these passions," says St. Augustine, "and these necessities will speedily disappear."—*Tunc finiuntur istæ necessitates, quando vincuntur illæ cupiditates.*

AUGUST 21.

ON THE PASSIONS.

I. *They make us hope for perfect bliss.*

They make us believe that the object which they propose to us comprehends all the good we can desire. The miser hopes to find it in riches; the ambitious man in the glory which he covets; the voluptuary in the pleasures for which he thirsts. All imagine that if they can, at any time, attain this object, all their desires will be satisfied; and it is in this expectation that they renounce all that they sacrifice, their God, their soul, and their salvation, to obtain this good—this good which alone appears desirable to them,

and which will suffice them in place of all others.

II. *But consider them when they have obtained it.*

What do they find? Anything but what they had expected.—This good which appeared to them so real and solid is no more than a phantom, a dream, an illusion. The pleasure which they expected, is soon changed into disgust; the rest which they promised themselves, into inquietude; there is always the same void in their heart. This thirst, which devours them, becomes every day more lively and ardent. They experience, at length, the truth of this saying of the wise man, that “pleasure is mingled with pain, and that the most delightful outpourings of joy are the commencement of sorrow.”

AUGUST 22.

ON THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

I. *What passes at the judgment which we must undergo after death.*

This may be expressed in those three words, which struck so much terror into King Balthazar's heart, when in the midst of a superb banquet he perceived an unknown hand write them on the wall: *Mane, Thecel, Phares*. The prophet Daniel was called to interpret these mysterious words, and he said that they signified: *number, weigh, and divide*. Now, this is what the Lord will do at his judgment. He will exactly number all the sins of our life. He will weigh them in the balance of his justice. He will compare them with our virtues and good works, and he will contrast the fewness and insufficiency of those works, with the multitude and enormity of our sins.

II. *To anticipate this terrible judgment :*

We, therefore, should exactly number our sins, and consequently our great and small sins, our sins of omission, and the sins which we have occasioned in others by our counsel or example. We should weigh them all as accurately as possible,

according to the various degrees of their malice and duration ; not in the balance of our self-love, but in that of God's justice. We should place on one side our infidelities, and on the other our good works ; and then compare them without diminishing the former, or exaggerating the price and merit of the latter. These three considerations are necessary to dispose us for receiving the sacrament of penance with fruit.

AUGUST 23.

ON THE PRAYERS WHICH ARE ADDRESSED TO
GOD FOR TEMPORAL WANTS.

I. *You may be told, with regard to those prayers, what Jesus Christ said to the children of Zebedee, who wished to have the two first places in his kingdom :—" You know not what you ask."*

Why ? Because you are ignorant of what is really good for you in this life. Sampson asked to be united for ever to a perfidious and inconstant woman, whose

society became the reproach and the misfortune of his life. Rachel, through shame and desolation at her sterility, prays to God for children, who were the cause of her death. Such a person asks for a long life, and obtains it from God, and he then finds, that he has lived too long for his peace and his fame. It would be necessary to see into futurity, like God, before we could ardently ask him for any of the goods of this life.

II. *We are equally ignorant of what are real evils with regard to this life.*

When Joseph was the object of his brothers' hatred and jealousy, shut up in a cistern, then sold as a slave to strangers, calumniated by his master's wife, loaded with chains, like a criminal, and buried in an obscure prison, could he have imagined that these tragic events were ordered by Providence to make him the arbiter of the destiny of Egypt, and the partaker of Pharaoh's power? St. Augustine then had reason to say, that the

fulfilment of our requests, with regard to the goods of this life, is often the effect of God's wrath : *aliquando iratus dat* ; and that the refusal of these very prayers is frequently a mark of his goodness : *aliquando propitius negat*.

AUGUST 24.

ON THE DISPOSITIONS WHICH A CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE WHEN HE ASKS TEMPORAL FAVOURS FROM GOD.

I. *He ought to await the effect of his prayers with the most perfect indifference.*

Be satisfied with exposing your wants to God, and abandon yourself to his providence. He knows what is good for you, and you do not ; he sees farther than the present ; he knows what can save you, and render you happy or miserable for the future, and you are ignorant of it. Imitate, then, the simplicity of the two sisters of Lazarus, who in the extremity of their brother's illness confined all their prayer to a representation of his state to

Jesus Christ. "Lord," said they, "he whom you love is sick." It was enough for them, to know that Jesus Christ loved their brother, and that he was made acquainted with his illness; they depended for the rest on his wisdom and bounty.

II. *He ought to fear when his prayers are heard.*

When every thing succeeds with you, when it seems that all the worldly treasures of God's power are open to your desires, take care, then, not to say, like the happy sinners of whom the Prophet Zachary speaks: "Behold, I am rich, I am contented and satisfied; every thing smiles on me, every thing prospers with me. God must love me, since he has made me happy in this world;" because this false bliss, which you look upon as a mark of his love, is, perhaps, an effect of his anger.

AUGUST 25.

ON THE PRAYERS WHICH WE OFFER TO GOD
FOR OUR SPIRITUAL NECESSITIES.

I. *When our prayers regard our temporal wants :*

They are nearly always blind and inconsiderate, because we know not what we ask ; and when they concern our spiritual necessities, they are generally false and deceitful, because we do not sincerely desire what we ask. You beg of God the grace to overcome your vicious habits, but you do not desire to overcome them. If you sincerely desired it, would you not do something to second your petitions to God ? Do you not know that he commands you to do what lies in your power : *Jubet facere quod possis* ; and to ask of him by prayer what you are unable to accomplish : *Petere quod non possis*. If you confine yourself to what is in your power without having recourse to God for your deficiency, he will chastise your

presumption: and if you are satisfied with praying for your deficiencies without doing what lies in your power, he will punish your omission.

II. *The first condition that our prayers may be heard, is, that we sincerely desire what we ask.*

“Wilt thou be made whole,” said Jesus to the paralytic man spoken of in the Gospel: *Vis sanus fieri?* You beg of God to heal your spiritual diseases, and he says to you, “Do you sincerely desire to be made whole? Will you give up the object of your passions?” No; you ask of God the salvation of your soul, and you still persist in your sinful habits, and make no effort to reform your life; these are the true dispositions of your heart, and if you persevere in them you will die in your sins.

AUGUST 26.

ON JUDGING OUR NEIGHBOUR.

I. "*Judge not,*" says our Lord, "*and you shall not be judged.*"

This admonition is addressed to those only who judge of others without any necessity; for we are allowed, and even commanded, to judge of the conduct and works of others when there is a just reason for doing so; it even becomes a duty on many, from their station in life, to examine into the manners and faults of those under their charge. A father, for example, is justified in judging of the conduct of his children; a master of his servant; and persons in authority of those under their command: they certainly are not permitted to judge them rashly, superficially, or unjustly; but they may and ought to examine how they discharge their relative duties, and judge of them accordingly. It often happens that those who are in authority dispense themselves



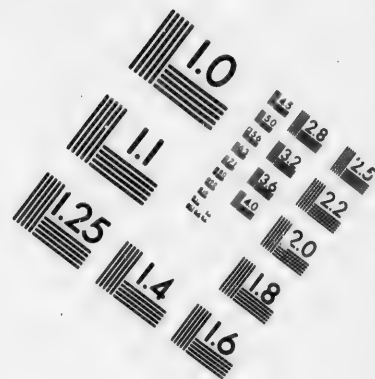
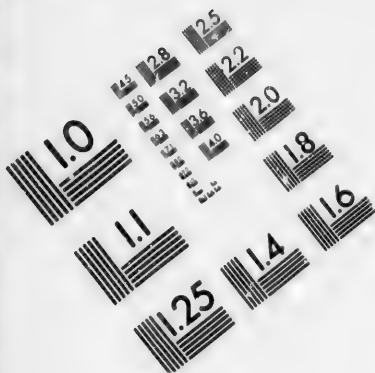
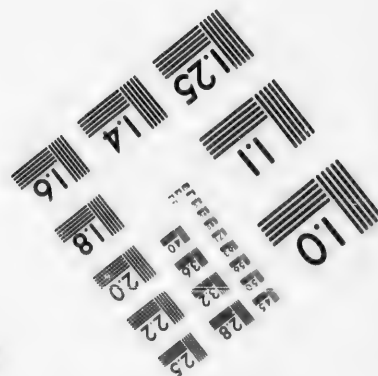
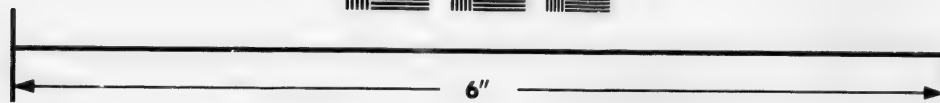
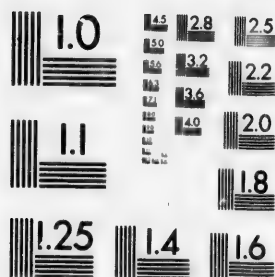


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from this obligation, through a spirit of sloth and negligence that makes them very culpable in the sight of God.

II. *Judgment is necessary to guard us against sinners and false prophets.*

Jesus Christ said, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."¹ To avoid those persons it is necessary to know their works, that you may judge of them; for their designs are dangerous, and their conduct ambiguous. "Shun them," says St. Augustine, "let your suspicions of them be founded on justice and reason: but do not condemn them, fearing your suspicions might be caused only by appearances."

AUGUST 27.

ON DOUBTS.

I. "*Beware of men,*" said our Saviour to his disciples, (*Cavete ab hominibus,*) not in the ordinary transactions of life, but in all

that is called business, interest, promise, or engagements.

Men will often say to you the contrary of what they think, for they are naturally disposed to dissimulation and deceit : *omnis homo mendax*, more especially when their own interests are concerned ; you ought, then, to doubt of them only in proportion to the interest they may or may not have, in persuading or flattering you.

II. *On enlightened doubts which are not contrary to Christian simplicity.*

Our Saviour says to us, "Be simple as doves : " *Estote simplices sicut columbæ* ; but he adds at the same time, "be prudent as serpents : " *Estote prudentes sicut serpentes*. Give no one reason to doubt of your sincerity, but you may sometimes justly doubt of theirs ; always adhere to truth, be simple and without artifice to all, but do not think that every one will be so to you ; in this you will imitate the simplicity of the dove, and the prudence of the serpent.

AUGUST 28.

ON SUSPICIONS.

I. *We must distinguish between judgment, doubt, and suspicion.*

To doubt is not to give full credit to any circumstance. Suspicion inclines you to believe the circumstance without being certain of it; but judgment asserts and decides on it; doubt says it may or may not be so; suspicion imagines there is a reason for believing it; but judgment confidentially affirms it. Doubt has for its object uncertainty; suspicion probability, and judgment the certain knowledge of a fact.

II. *Well founded suspicion is not more criminal than doubt.*

When you remain in uncertainty, without passing judgment on the circumstance, the likelihood which is only the appearance of truth is sufficient to justify suspicion, but nothing less than certain truth should authorize judgment.

AUGUST 29.

ON THE LIMITS WE SHOULD PLACE TO DOUBTS
AND SUSPICIONS.

I. *Either may be carried to excess.*

It is a very great fault to be doubtful and suspicious; that is, to be so without foundation—to be so at every proposal and on every occasion, to be constantly and habitually mistrusting others, doubting when we have a certainty, and suspecting when there is not the least reason to warrant suspicion. There are therefore injurious suspicions, odious and unjust suspicions, with which we should reproach ourselves, and which are equally opposed to reason and charity.

II. *When doubt and suspicion rests on uncertainty and probability:*

It is then time to say that one doubts without being doubtful; and that one suspects without being suspicious. We must therefore call ourselves to a strict account in the examination of our con-

science for the unjust thoughts which have occupied our mind in reflecting on the actions and characters of those with whom we have an intercourse, or with whom we are obliged to live.

AUGUST 30.

ON THE DEFECTS WHICH RENDER OUR JUDGMENTS RASH.

I. *We judge rashly, when we judge without necessity, without knowledge, and without equity.*

For, in order to constitute rash judgment, it is necessary that there should be *a judgment*; it is not sufficient that one entertains doubt or suspicion. It is necessary that one should judge and decide in his own mind, that such a person is guilty of such a fault, that he is, or is not, subject to such a vice. Necessity, knowledge, and justice, are three essential conditions, without which every judgment is rash.

II. *We may say that virtue is so rare among men, that we run no risk of rash judgment by judging ill of them.*

If this maxim were true, it would follow, that all were equally vicious, and that the conduct and actions of all were equally bad; which is evidently false. For, it is certain that all men are not equally vicious. It is no less certain that the conduct and actions of the vicious are always equally wicked: one therefore frequently exposes himself to rash judgment, if he always form a sinister judgment of their intentions and conduct.

AUGUST 31.

ON THE RASH JUDGMENTS OF THOSE WHO
JUDGE WITHOUT AUTHORITY.

I. *When you judge your neighbour without necessity, you usurp a right that does not belong to you.*

“Who are you,” says the apostle St. James, “that judge your neighbour?” Who has given you authority? It is not

God ; for he expressly commands you not to judge : *Nolite judicare*, "judge not." By rash judgment you assume a power that is not yours, and that God refuses you, and you usurp a right that does not belong to you.

II. *You irritate your own judge against you.*

For he has told you, "I will judge you as you will have judged your brethren, and he who has judged without mercy cannot hope for mercy. You have neither compassion, indulgence nor charity for your neighbour. Do not hope that any will be extended to yourself.—You have closed your eyes to all that could justify them, or make them appear less culpable: how then can you expect that I will receive any excuses from you for your own conduct ? "

SEPTEMBER 1.

ON RASH JUDGMENT FOR WANT OF SUFFICIENT
KNOWLEDGE.

I. *You judge of appearances, or on conjectures, without examining into the truth; or on common report, without knowing the author of it.*

You judge from the report of interested persons who may deceive you, and wish to deprive others of your esteem, who are more worthy of it than themselves: but common report and conjecture are not sufficient motives to form your judgment, for you may be greatly deceived by them; you must have a certain assurance of the fact, and if you have not, you should use every means to ascertain it.

II. *You are not content with judging the actions of your neighbour, but you also judge his intentions.*

What can be more rash? God alone knows the heart of man. He has reserved this knowledge for himself, and nothing

irritates a judge against a criminal more than to see his right of pronouncing judgment disputed when it belongs only to him. How can you know what passes in the human heart ; you do not even know your own, how then can you with justice judge of the intentions of your neighbour ?

SEPTEMBER 2.

ON RASH JUDGMENT FOR WANT OF EQUITY.

I. *We judge of others by ourselves.*

This is a false rule, and from it arises the evil construction we put on the actions of others. The mind of the wicked is filled with bad thoughts, and they see evil in all the objects that surround them. The deceitful man believes that every one who approaches him will deceive him ; and the voluptuous man thinks he sees in every one the image of his own weakness.

II. *We judge by passion, hatred, jealousy, or from a desire of revenge.*

We cannot see talent nor virtue in our

enemies or rivals; we interpret all their words and actions in the worst sense; we pass the most severe scrutiny on their conduct, and censure them on every opportunity that offers. If we speak of our friends, we speak kindly of them; but if we speak of our enemies, we condemn them without mercy.

SEPTEMBER 3.

ON THE PRETEXTS WE USE TO JUSTIFY RASH JUDGMENTS.

I. *We believe we can justify our rash Judgments.*

We endeavour to justify ourselves by saying, that, what we asserted was a secret, and that if it were unjust, our neighbour could not be injured by an injustice of which he was ignorant. But remember that religion forbids not only the exterior act of sin, but also the interior sentiment that influences us to commit it. Religion condemns all thoughts and desires contrary to purity; because they are

the principles that lead to sins against chastity ; for the same reason she forbids rash judgment, because it is the principle of calumny, which is the expression of the rash judgment that is formed in our mind.

II. *Though conscience may be the only witness of rash judgment, God will always avenge it.*

How is it possible that God, who is justice and charity itself, should not be offended by this blind and precipitate judgment, which rests on mere doubt and uncertainty ; in which the person judged is condemned without having any means of justifying himself, without even knowing that he is judged, or that his judge has taken sufficient pains to weigh exactly all the reasons for his condemnation or acquittal ?

SEPTEMBER 4.

ON THE INJUSTICE OF RASH JUDGMENT.

I. "*Judge not according to appearance,*"
says the Saviour, "but according to justice."

Do not imitate the proud Pharisee, who, seeing the humble publican prostrate in the temple, judged him to be a robber and an extortioner. He deprives the people, he says, of their goods, and makes use of Cæsar's name and authority to commit a thousand unjust acts. This judgment of the Pharisee was known only to God, who refuses him the merit of all his almsdeeds and fasting. Take care never to judge of a man by the profession he follows, nor censure any community for the disorders some of its members may be guilty of.

II. *The Pharisee judged only from appearance.*

He was filled with pride and presumption; his vanity was gratified in recounting his good works and false virtues.—

We judge of others, and we do not know ourselves, nor see our own faults. A true Christian is attentive only to his own miseries ; and the more evil he sees in others, the more he fears for himself. If we were to judge only from appearance, who would not consider the Pharisee more just than the Publican ? But God, who knows all hearts, judged differently : and his judgments are always just.

SEPTEMBER 5.

ON THE MEANS TO AVOID RASH JUDGMENTS.

I. *The first is, to excuse the intention, when the action appears inexcusable.*

Excusa intentionem, said St. Bernard, *si opus non potes*. Instead of judging and condemning your neighbour with rashness and rigour, have feelings of charity for him, and say : " This man has been more unfortunate than culpable in committing such an act ; he might not have known the consequences that would result from it, or if he has been guilty of the crime

imputed to him, he might have been drawn into it by others, or have been deceived himself."

II. *The second is, to reflect on your own weakness, when neither the action nor intention can be excused.*

Say to yourself, perhaps I would have been more guilty than this person, if I had been placed in the same circumstances.—"Retire into yourself," said St. Bernard, "and measure the charity and compassion you have for your neighbour by what you have for yourself;" you will not then be so liable to judge harshly of the intentions and actions of others.

SEPTEMBER 6.

ON CURIOSITY.

I. *There is a laudable and necessary curiosity.*

If in your station of life you are placed in authority over others, or have children and young persons under your care, it then becomes a duty to watch their con-

duct carefully ; and to inquire into every thing concerning them ; and to study their inclinations and dispositions. If we are placed over the poor, we should examine into their wants and complaints, whether they are true or false : this is a praiseworthy and laudable curiosity.

II. *There is a dangerous and criminal curiosity which should always be repressed.*

To be ever watching and prying into the conduct of others. without having the desire, will, or power, to do good : but only to gratify a desire for slander or criticism, is a dangerous and criminal curiosity ; for it is the germ and principle of rash judgment, and continual food for calumny and detraction. If you would avoid these sins, avoid the source of them. Follow the counsel of St. Bernard :—*Cave alienæ conversationis esse curiosus explorator* : “Never inquire from curiosity what others are doing, nor desire to see it ; but beg of God the grace to know yourself :”
Nosce te ipsum.

SEPTEMBER 7.

ON THE SINS OF THE TONGUE.

I. *These sins are innumerable.*

"The tongue," says St. James, "is indeed a little member," and yet how many sins are committed by it! "By it we bless God and the Father; by it we curse man who is made to the image and likeness of God." But we praise and bless him in vain when we dishonour his image. "The tongue," adds the apostle, "no man can tame; a restless evil full of deadly poison." It is oftener employed in offending than in glorifying God. From the tongue proceed innumerable evils; and the passions arising from the bad use of it are universal. *Universitas iniquitatis.*

II. *These sins produce an infinity of others.*

"The tongue," says the same apostle, "is a fire, a world of iniquity." It is a devouring fire that burns and sometimes soothes, before it injures; but it withers all it touches, and blackens all it cannot

consume. A spark will often occasion a great fire, and one word will produce a thousand disorders, which will reproduce evils that can never be remedied.

SEPTEMBER 8.

ON SLANDER.

I. *Slander is generally false and exaggerated.*

Examine all the slanders you have repeated and circulated in the most confident tone of assurance, and you will find that they have been almost always founded on very equivocal appearances, and frivolous conjectures, false suspicions, vague and uncertain reports, false reasoning, and rash judgments.

II. *Even when slander is true it is not less criminal to repeat it.*

There are always slanderers, and consequently there is always sin. "God hates the detractor," says the apostle: *Detractores Deo odibiles*. "The venom of asps is concealed under their lips,"

said the prophet, "and their mouth is like an open sepulchre that breathes the odour of death:" *Sepulchrum patens est guttur eorum*. "A bad word," says St. Bernard, "is easily pronounced, and it fails not to leave a bad impression:" *Leviter volat sed graviter vulnerat*. A personal wound may be inflicted and healed; but the injury of the reputation of our neighbour remains while he exists, and it is often impossible to make any reparation for it: *Leviter transit, sed graviter urit*.

SEPTEMBER 9.

ON THE PRETENDED HARMLESSNESS OF OUR
SLANDER.

I. *We consider it harmless if we only listen to slander and do not speak it.*

We would not apparently ruin the fortune of a man, nor injure his credit in the world; nor openly condemn a woman on essential points; but we mingle in our conversations a thousand insinuations which we dare not openly utter,

and raise in the minds of those who hear us, suspicions which are never removed. We find out the secret of slandering without speaking. By a gesture, a wink, a malicious smile, an affected reserve, we may convey our meaning, though we remain silent. But whether we injure the reputation of others by words or by signs, it is equally offensive to God, and we are equally culpable in his sight.

II. *We think our slander harmless when we only speak of the natural weakness of our neighbour without attacking his character.*

We consider these weaknesses as subjects for our slanders. Is it, then, a matter of indifference to a man to have his frailties known and published? Are not his feelings wounded by having his natural weakness made known? How can we expect that others will have charity and feeling for us, when we show so little for them? This is not loving our neighbour as ourselves.

SEPTEMBER 10.

ON THE MOTIVES FOR SLANDER.

I. *You say you speak of the faults of others only for conversation and amusement, without any design of injuring them; but this will not justify you.*

If we are to give an account at the judgment-seat of God, for every idle word; if a punishment be annexed to calling our brother a fool; will not our Lord punish with rigour, those persons whose entire conversation consists in slandering their neighbour? Are we allowed to hold up a man as an object of contempt to an entire assembly? Does charity rejoice in evil? Does not St. Paul say, that "the detractor will have no part in the kingdom of God," and does he not place them in the same rank with idolators and adulterers?

II. *It seldom happens that amusement is the only motive for our slanders.*

There are always some persons whom

you will censure more freely, and whose character you will scrutinize more closely than others, and why do you make this distinction? Because there is a spirit of envy in your slanders, and a feeling of hatred and jealousy towards the objects of it. Those persons would not be the subjects of your detraction if their talents, merits and reputation, did not cause you a secret uneasiness; and you would not find amusement in exposing their weaknesses, if they were not considered by many more estimable than yourself.

SEPTEMBER 11.

ON THE EVIL EFFECTS OF HABITUATING ONE'S
SELF TO SLANDER.

I. *We give ourselves such a habit of slandering that we speak without reflection: but this will not excuse us.*

Levity and indiscretion are vices so contrary to Christian prudence, that far from serving as an excuse for our want of reflection, it only makes us more

guilty : a poisoned arrow does not wound less deeply by being directed by chance and without design.—“He who knows not how to restrain his tongue,” said the apostle, “is unworthy to bear the name of a Christian.” He is only one in appearance : *Hujus vana est religio.*

II. *We are silent, discreet and reserved, on what concerns our own interests.*

With what circumspection and caution do we not speak of what concerns ourselves, and how careful we are not to divulge anything that would lessen us, or injure our own interests in the remotest degree ! Our words and our silence are regulated by our self-love. If we loved our neighbour as we love ourselves, we would be equally guarded in speaking of him, and cautious in saying anything that would injure his interests.

SEPTEMBER 12.

ON THE INJURY DONE TO PERSONS ATTACKED
BY SLANDER.

I. *We should be aware of its grievousness.*

If you accuse a woman of being unfaithful to her husband; a servant of dishonesty to his master; a soldier of cowardice; or a judge of partiality and injustice, your detraction is not of a light nature; for these are certainly very great crimes. You attack the character of those persons on very essential matters, and injure them materially. On such points suspicion becomes dishonour, rail-lery an outrage, and publicity defamation.

II. *The world judges differently of it.*

The world is so familiar with vice, which has extended to every state, that people are no longer shocked at the commission of it, and consider detraction only as a trivial sin, even when the most shameful crimes are spoken of, and the

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SEPTEMBER 13.

ON SLANDER WHEN IT ATTACKS THE MINISTERS OF RELIGION, OR PERSONS CONSECRATED TO GOD.

I. There can be no greater encouragement to the impiety of the wicked, than to attack, by slander, the ministers of religion, or persons consecrated to God.

Those who do it are enemies to faith and piety; they take pleasure in slandering all who are dedicated to the service of God. They endeavour to find out faults in them, to censure and condemn them. The purer and more exemplary their lives are, the more eager are these detractors to publish all they consider shameful and disgraceful.

II. The motives for this sort of detraction:

Are, to dishonour religion in the person of its ministers—to make those who seem to walk in the paths of virtue and piety appear as hypocrites—to give all men a distaste for religion, by persuading them that there is no true virtue on earth—to confirm the impious in their wickedness, and to overturn the precepts of the Gospel.

SEPTEMBER 14.

ON THE CONSEQUENCE OF SLANDER.

I. *It spreads with great facility.*

The world encourages slander, and how can you expect that slander will remain secret when the world approves of it? If charity reigned in the hearts of men, detraction would make less progress in society; but, alas! where is this divine virtue that is afflicted at evil, and that would, if possible, efface even the remembrance of it? The same malignant principle that makes you speak ill of your neighbour, inclines you to hear-

ken to all that is said against him. Each person adds all that his passions and interests may suggest. If you assent to this, your slanders are changed to calumnies, and you become answerable for all you have reported, and for all the falsehoods that are added by others to exaggerate your reports.

II. *Slander is irreparable in its results.*

How can you repair it? Can you stop the public voice which you have excited? Can you retract what you have said? You may affect to praise those whom you have spoken ill of, but your praises come too late: they only serve to draw down new satires. You wish to repair the evil you have done, but you have not the power, for the repentance of a penitent always finds less credit in the world than the malice of the sinner.

SEPTEMBER 15.

ON IMPIOUS DISCOURSES.

I. *They often form part of the conversations of the world.*

You say you do not sanction impious or irreligious conversations; but have you the courage to show your dislike to them, or to silence the persons who speak in your presence? You conceal your religious sentiments, fearing to be considered weak-minded and ignorant, or dreading to incur the censure or ridicule of the wicked. You are so pusillanimous that you would wish to preserve the esteem and respect of the very persons you affect to despise. Alas! you sometimes even applaud them, at least tacitly, by signs of complaisance and approbation.

II. *A Christian should not silently listen to conversations that attack faith, and the truths of religion.*

A Christian should defend religion, and

endeavour to silence those who speak against it; if he cannot succeed, let him show his disapprobation by every means in his power, and let the impious see that he has a religious horror of their words, and that his mind is fixed on the great truths of religion. Let him say to them:—"I am a Christian: I do not blush at the Gospel."

SEPTEMBER 16.

ON IMMODEST CONVERSATIONS.

I. *There are two kinds.*

One that openly wounds modesty, and is forbidden by St. Paul, to the faithful, when he says: "Let not fornication or any kind of impurity be even named amongst you." The mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart, and immodest conversations come from an impure and corrupted mind; and yours should be pure and sanctified by grace. Those who despise modesty in their discourse, profane those ears and tongues that were

consecrated to God in baptism. They commit a scandalous sin, and destroy souls which Jesus Christ has purchased with his precious blood: and those who listen with pleasure to such licentious conversations are not less guilty than those who utter them.

II. *There is another kind of conversation not less sinful, though apparently not so impure.*

The grossest images are often enveloped in so thick a veil. that they are not immediately seen, though enough is left uncovered to disclose the meaning they are intended to convey. These discourses make a most fatal impression, and many join in them without scruple. Make a firm resolution never to practise this fatal art, and by a modest reserve repress the licentiousness of those who would endeavour to familiarize you with vice, and give you a distaste for virtue.

SEPTEMBER 17.

ON ANGER.

I. "*Let your anger be without sin.*"

Anger in some cases is justifiable and allowed, in others it is unjust and forbidden. It sometimes arises from zeal, and sometimes from passion, and is very different in principle, effect, and duration. The principle of anger arising from zeal, is from a just and sincere desire of preventing sin; its effects are prompt, just, and efficacious, in preventing evil; its duration is short; for being an extraordinary excitement, the just always fear it may degenerate into passion, and always have in view the precept of the apostle: "Let not the sun set on your anger."

II. *The principle of forbidden anger,*

Is pride, vanity, self-love, bitterness, and impatience; its effects are lasting and violent; it breaks out in oaths, imprecations, and blasphemies; it is obstinate, and will not be subdued; it ceases

not until every revengeful passion is satisfied. The ancients called anger a short-lived madness : they fled from a man subject to this vice as if he were a ferocious beast, and feared to approach him, even when he was appeased and tranquil.

SEPTEMBER 18.

THE CHARACTER OF ANGER, ARISING FROM ZEAL.

I. *It consists in the noble indignation a virtuous soul feels at an unjust and criminal action.*

This holy anger is from God. It is less a vice than the effect of a sublime virtue ; it cannot become sinful, when it is guided by charity and justice. It is the image of the anger of God, who at the same time, confirmed the angels in glory, and condemned the devils to torments, without any sentiment of hatred or passion troubling his divine will, which is the immutable centre of tranquillity and peace.

II. *Do not confound the just anger of the*

saints, with the shameful excesses of passionate anger.

The anger of the saints was only enkindled when the interests of God and religion were concerned. They were calm and silent on their own concerns. "We act otherwise," says St. Chrysostom; "we are carried away with anger when we are personally attacked; but when the glory of God, or the love of souls which he has redeemed with his blood, is concerned, we feel neither resentment nor anger."

SEPTEMBER 19.

ON THE CHARACTER OF ANGER ARISING FROM
PASSION.

I. It is a vice contrary to all the laws of humanity.

Man was created to be guided in all his actions by reason and justice; and passionate anger obscures both. He was created for the good of society, and passionate anger makes him its pest; he was

born to be loved, and do good to his fellow-creature : anger makes him be hated, and breaks the mutual and necessary bonds that bind him to society. Passionate anger causes many evils, and makes us unworthy and even incapable of doing good.

II. *It is a vice that makes us disregard all the rules of prudence.*

You would wish to make yourself feared by the violence of your anger ; but you are secretly despised for it ; you think to make yourself respected, but you cannot succeed ; dislike has gone before you ; your humour is known, and it is also known of you, that in the first contradiction you will give yourself up to the same transports of rage ; there is no value set on your favours ; you sell them too dearly. This turbulent passion makes your dependants more careful to conceal their faults from you, and more timid in disclosing them ; but it does not make them more scrupulous in committing them.

SEPTEMBER 20.

ON THE SANCTITY OF GOD.

I. *It should be the model of ours.*

"Be perfect," says the Saviour, "as your heavenly Father is perfect." "Be my imitators," said the apostle to the first Christians, "as I am the imitator of Jesus Christ." Not that weak and sinful man can ever attain to the sublime perfection of the Sovereign Being; but he should endeavour, as far as the infirmity of human nature will permit, to imitate it. In this sense the saints in the holy Scriptures are called gods: (*Ego dixi, Dii estis, et filii excelsi omnes,*) and it is in this sense they are called children of God; for they are conducted by the spirit of God. *Qui spiritu Dei aguntur, hi sunt filii Dei.* Examine, then, by what spirit you are directed: *Spiritus probate utrum ex Deo sint.* If the spirit of God direct them, all your actions will be holy and divine;

they will be criminal and inordinate if it be the spirit of the devil.

II. *This rule is sufficient to distinguish vice from virtue.*

If you be influenced by a spirit of injustice, your acts will be contrary to the equity that is in God, and will be in conformity to the spirit of the devil, the father of iniquity. If you be directed by a spirit of fraud and duplicity, your actions are in opposition to that truth which is in God, and you follow the dictates of the promoter of all evil.

SEPTEMBER 21.

ON LIES.

I. *Lies were introduced into the world by the devil.*

Man was created innocent, simple, and ingenuous. The first lie told on earth was invented by the angel of darkness, to deceive our first parents in promising them goods and advantages which he had neither power nor will to procure for

them. This first lie has been the source and the origin of all others, and if anything were capable of giving us a horror of falsehood, it would be the recollection of its author; for we would then be convinced that the devil is the father of lies.

II. *Lies are forbidden by the law of God.*

Many deceive themselves by thinking that the commandment of God only forbids us to bear false witness. By telling a lie we give testimony against our own thoughts in saying what we know to be false, with the design of deceiving those who hear us; for we cannot elude the law of God, which makes no distinction between lies and false testimony. The apostle St. Paul, in exhorting the faithful to put off the old man, that is "the man of sin," characterizes lies as the first of bad actions. "Begin," he says, "renouncing lies, and always speak truth."

SEPTEMBER 22.

ON TRIVIAL LIES.

I. *We scarcely look on them as sins.*

Many excuse themselves by saying, "I always pay some attention to truth in conversation; yet to spare myself from the reproaches I am menaced with, I deny facts which I know to be true; and to make myself more agreeable, I often invent what never happened.

II. *We are obliged to avoid them.*

"They are not great faults if you will," says St. Augustine:—*Non magnæ culpæ*; "yet they are faults:" *non tamen sine culpa*. "Do you account these trivial lies as nothing?" adds St. Jerom: *Ista levia noli contemnere*. "If you are not alarmed at their lightness, you should tremble at their number:" *Si contemnis quando appendis, expavisce quando numeras*.

SEPTEMBER 23.

ON OFFICIOUS LIES.

I. *They are contrary to the charity we owe our neighbour.*

Far from desiring to commit sin by this kind of lies, we seek to deceive our neighbour for his own advantage, in relating falsely what would give him uneasiness if he knew the truth, or in disguising an event that would cause him great sorrow. "I acknowledge," says St. Augustine, "there are circumstances when to know the truth would be fatal to the happiness of our neighbour, and even to his life; I would then endeavour to preserve charity by silence; but if there were an absolute necessity for speaking, I would rather say the truth than embarrass myself by lies."

II. *An officious lie is always to be condemned, being contrary to truth.*

"It is certain and indubitable," says St. Augustine, "that a Christian is never permitted to tell a lie, let the occasion be,

what it may. I do everything to my neighbour in charity, without violating the law of God; but if I cannot serve him without violating truth, and consequently wounding my conscience, I owe him nothing."

SEPTEMBER 24.

ON THE CARE A CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE OF THE
REPUTATION OF HIS NEIGHBOUR.

I. "*Take care of your own reputation,*" says the wise man, "*and that of your brethren; for you should love them as yourself.*"

We sin against this duty of charity in four different ways when we speak ill of our neighbour. The first and most to be feared is, falsely imputing to our neighbour faults he did not commit; this is justly called *calumny*. The second is, discovering them to those who did not know them, or who had no right to be made acquainted with them; this is called *detraction*. The third is, exaggerating his

faults; the fourth is giving them publicity, by repeating and impressing them on the minds of others.

II. *It is also a sin against the duty of charity in another way.*

To attribute the good works of our neighbour to bad motives; to conceal his merit from those who should be acquainted with it; to put a malignant construction on his words; to give an imperfect and unfaithful testimony of his good qualities; to be silent, and dissimulate when we should speak well of him, or to speak with an indifferent coldness of his qualifications.

SEPTEMBER 25.

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

I. *We cannot avoid the presence of God.*

Wherever I am, the Lord is with me; in him I live, and move, and have my being. I cannot see this invisible God; but I know I am surrounded with the immensity of his presence. "Where shall

I go, O Lord !" said the prophet, " to conceal myself from you ? If I should bury myself in darkness : when you would discover me, the darkest night would become luminous. You are present every where ; before I pronounce my words, you know my thoughts. O Sovereign Judge ! who would dare to commit sin if they were truly sensible of your presence ?"

II. *We can conceal nothing from God.*

"The Lord," said the prophet, " looks from the highest heavens on earth, and at a glance sees all the children of men ; he enlightens their ways, he counts their steps ; for him there is neither obscurity nor distance. Wherever I am, God sees and hears me ; his views are not limited like those of his creatures ; he reads my heart, he searches the inmost folds of it, he discovers all my sentiments : *Omnia nuda, et aperta sunt oculis ejus.*

SEPTEMBER 26.

ON THE FORGETFULNESS OF THE PRESENCE OF
GOD.

I. *This forgetfulness is one of the chief causes of our disorders.*

“From whence come the iniquities of Israel?” asks the prophet. “Is it not that they forget the presence of God?” *Iniquitas Israel magna est nimis; dixerunt enim Deus non videt.* We sin and sink without shame into an abyss of guilt, because we live as if God was not the witness and judge of, all our actions, or as if we were removed far from his presence.

II. *This voluntary forgetfulness has for its principle a want of the love of God.*

If I loved you sincerely, O my God! if your divine love was deeply engraven on my heart, and enlivened every sentiment of it, my thoughts would be continually fixed on you. I would not so easily forget that I am always in your presence. But, O God! this forgetfulness is a mark of the

little respect and love I have for you. Your eyes are always on me, and I do not adore you ; you surround me and I do not see you ; you are within me and I know you not.

SEPTEMBER 27.

ON CONTINUAL ATTENTION TO THE PRESENCE
OF GOD.

I. *This attention is the true way of sanctifying all our actions.*

Can we dare to commit sin in the presence of our Master and Judge? "I would rather die," said the chaste Susanna, "than to sin in the presence of God." "The Lord was always present to my eyes," said the prophet, "because I know he is always ready to support me." With what submission and respect does not the presence of a monarch animate his subjects ! What an impression should not the presence of God make on a Christian !

II. *This attention is the means of continual prayer.*

Jesus Christ and his apostles desire us to pray without ceasing. Who can acquit themselves better of this duty than those who are constantly attentive to the presence of God? "A Christian," says St. Hilarion, "prays without ceasing, when he does all his works for the honour and glory of God, and when they are sanctified by his divine presence. His life then becomes a continuation of praises and benedictions; all that religion and duty command he fulfils under the eyes of God; he is secure under his holy protection; and is always united to him in prayer."

SEPTEMBER 28.

ON THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

I. *This necessity is founded on grace.*

We cannot hope for salvation without prayer; God is not indebted to us in justice: should we not, therefore, address our prayers to him to bestow on us his grace and blessings? "Grace and prayer,"

says St. Jerom, "cannot be separated. If you remove or establish the necessity of grace, you remove or establish the necessity of prayer. Find me a man that does not want grace, and I will acknowledge that he does not want prayer."

II. *On the homage we should pay to the greatness, power, and goodness of God.*

We honour his divinity by sacrifice; his justice by our repentance; his sovereignty by our obedience; his providence by our resignation; his greatness, power, and goodness, by our prayers. Prayer is an acknowledgment to God of his power, goodness, mercy, and magnificence; it is saying to him, that we expect every thing from him, and can do nothing without him.

SEPTEMBER 29.

ON THE OBLIGATION WE ARE UNDER OF PRAYING ALWAYS.

I. *We should always pray.*

For there is no time, place, circumstance, nor state, in which we do not

want the assistance of God. If we are in sin, we want grace to repent; if we are in the state of justice and sanctity, we require grace to persevere. "Nothing," says St. Chrysostom, "can excuse you from praying always; it is not genuflections, prostrations, or long studies, that God requires from you, nor a continual painful application of your mind. What God requires of you is, to be always attentive to please him, to be disposed to obey his commandments, and to be docile and obedient to his holy will."

II. God is always ready to hear and help us.

Prayer is not limited to any hour, nor any place; at all times and every where we can pray; we can always have access to God. He is ever ready to hear us; nothing can impede us from approaching to him; we may be tired praying to him; but he will never reject our supplications.

• SEPTEMBER 30.

ON THE PRAYERS OF SINNERS.

I. *They disavow by their conduct what they say to God in their prayers.*

“When you pray to God,” says St. Chrysostom, “without forsaking sin, you call God your father, whom you do not love.—You pray to him, that you may glorify his name, and you dishonour it; for the advancement of his kingdom on earth, which you endeavour to destroy; and for the accomplishment of his holy will, which you continually resist; you pray for the remission of your sins, and you daily increase them; you beg to be preserved from temptations, and you seek them; and to be removed from the evil way which you desire.”

II. *Sinners expect that God will hear their prayers, and they refuse all he requires from them.*

They pray to him with arms in their hands; they prostrate themselves before

his altars, and their hearts are possessed by the devil. God commands them to love him, and they do not deign to hear him. What God requires is just and equitable: when he commands he speaks as a master; when man prays he should ask as a suppliant; can he expect that God will listen to his supplications when he obstinately refuses to obey his holy commandments?

OCTOBER 1.

ON THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

I. *It draws its principal efficacy from the mediation of Christ.*

"If you ask any thing of the Father in my name, he will grant it to you." The Church invokes that adorable Name at the conclusion of her prayers. When we ask any thing in the name of Jesus Christ, "let us ask it with a lively faith and a firm confidence in the merits of Christ." When I pray with this faith and firm confidence in Christ, he prays in me and

with me, and the Lord hears him, because of the love he bears him. *Exauditus est pro sua reverentia.* My prayers united to the merits of Christ are pleasing to God. Separated from his merits, they are of no avail. If Jesus Christ prays not with me, what efficacy is there in my prayers?—They are useless from their insufficiency.

H. *We should imitate the virtues of Jesus Christ when we ask anything in his holy Name.*

When we call on the holy Name of Jesus in our prayers, we apply his merits to our souls; but we endeavour not to sanctify ourselves by the imitation of his virtues. This divine Saviour will not communicate his graces to us if he do not find in us humility, mortification, patience, and charity, or, at least, the desire of possessing those virtues. "You have asked nothing in my name," said he to his disciples, "because you have asked nothing with that lively faith which

obtains all things, and that ardent charity which enlivens all."

OCTOBER 2.

ON ABANDONING PRAYER.

I. *It is a great misfortune for a Christian to abandon prayer;*

For he renounces, then, every means of salvation; he renounces virtue, and delivers himself to his passions; he can neither practise the one nor vanquish the other, but by the help of grace, which is obtained by prayer. If through sloth he neglect prayer, what can be more deplorable than for a man to lose his soul because he will not call on the Lord to save him? If it be from hardness of heart, it is yet more grievous, that a man covered with mortal wounds refuses to say—"heal me, O Lord!"

II. *To lose all relish and esteem for prayer is the cause of every disorder in a Christian.*

There remains some hope for those

who know and believe in the advantage of prayer, though they may not practise it; but what can be expected from a man who has lost all respect and love for prayer, and even despises it? He shows a consummate hardness of heart, a total contempt of religion, a fixed and persevering impenitence, an obdurate blindness, and an anticipated reprobation.

OCTOBER 3:

ON THE INEFFICACY OF PRAYER.

I. *We often ask of God what would be prejudicial to our salvation.*

We pray to God for health that we may live in idleness and dissipation; we beg his assistance in some enterprise undertaken for avaricious or ambitious motives; and we even dare to ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ: in other words, we ask this Divine Saviour to be a mediator for our passions and crimes.

II. *We ask favours of God that have no reference to our salvation.*

We are desired to "seek first the kingdom of God and his justice:" *Querite primum regnum Dei*; and this is what we pray for with the greatest coldness and negligence; temporal advantages hold the first place in our thoughts and prayers. We imitate the folly of a man who would importune a mighty king for trifles that would be unworthy of him to bestow. "What you ask of me," said a great prince, "is enough for you to demand; but not enough for me to give." We ask of God favours as insignificant as ourselves, and beneath his omnipotence to grant.

OCTOBER 4.

ON THE PRAYERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. *They should be the model of ours, as we pray in the name of Jesus; our prayers will be inefficacious if he pray not with us.*

What does Jesus ask for us from his Father? We find it in the prayer he made for his disciples. He asked first, that the love of God might be engraven on their hearts: *Ut dilectio qua dilexisti me in ipsis sit.* That they may be united to each other in the unity of faith and charity: *Ut sint consummati in unum.* That they might be holy in mind and in truth: *Sanctifica eos in veritate;* and that they might live in the world without taking part in its wickedness: *Non rogo ut tollas eos de mundo, sed ut serves eos a malo.*

II. *You should ask of God the grace of loving him above all things, and loving your neighbour as yourself.*

These are the two great precepts of the law. The grace of perfect sanctity, which is the result of faithfully fulfilling these two precepts, and the grace of walking in the paths of justice and truth, amidst all the dangers and temptations of the world.

OCTOBER 5.

ON ATTENTION AT PRAYER.

I. *Attention is the essence of prayer.*

The difference between vocal and mental prayer does not consist in one being an effort of the mind, and the other being pronounced in words; for each kind of prayer requires the same attention and effort of the mind. The difference is, in vocal prayer the spirit animates the words; in mental prayer the mind acts without the words. The Lord is not moved but by the attention of the mind; we may praise him for his mercies and goodness in the most tender and affecting language, but we are, as it were, dumb, if our thoughts and attention be not with our words.

II. *We are almost always inattentive at prayer.*

We may recite long offices full of the purest sentiments of divine love, and employ many hours in repeating prayers,

without having made one act of faith, love, or adoration. The lips are moved, the voice is heard, but the heart has said nothing. We have pronounced many words, but have not said one prayer.

OCTOBER 6.

ON VOLUNTARY DISTRACTIONS.

I. *They are criminal in themselves.*

They are an insult to the majesty of the Most High, in an exercise which should be consecrated to his glory; they are a formal disavowal of the exterior homage we pay to him, and contradict the subject of our prayer. We beg of God to hear us, and to grant us our petitions, and we pay no attention to our own words. If we cannot be always perfectly recollected during prayer, or at the public offices of the Church, we can always raise our thoughts and hearts to God, and represent our wants and miseries to him.

II. *They are criminal in their principle :*

Because they spring from our little faith, our small love for God, our little gratitude for his benefits, our little fear for his judgments, our little respect for the majesty of his presence, our little sorrow for our sins, our little desire for future goods, and our too great ardour and attachment to the frivolous goods which the figure of the world presents to our view.

OCTOBER 7.

ON INVOLUNTARY DISTRACTIONS.

I. *We should look on them as humiliating marks of our weakness.*

The carnal and terrestrial spirit that is in us, often interrupts with distractions the prayers of the spiritual man when he would discourse with God.—These worldly thoughts, these frivolous images, which present themselves to our imagination without our consent, are a temptation and weakness which God permits to humble us under his powerful hand and to

make us feel the want of his grace to support our virtue.

II. *We should promptly reject them.*

The moment we stop to reflect on them they become voluntary by our consenting to them, and we should fear to draw down on ourselves the malediction with which the prophet, in his zeal, menaced the sinner, when he said :—" Even let his prayer become a sin for him : " *Oratio ejus fiat in peccatum.*

OCTOBER 8.

ON INTEMPERANCE.

I. *It is a very common vice.*

The wealthy are seated every day at tables covered abundantly with every delicacy. They may be justly compared to the rich man spoken of in the gospel ; for they are accustomed to gratify all their desires to excess. Simple nature never satisfies them : this cupidity requires superfluity. They seek pleasure as if they were created only for the en-

joyment of it: they know no limit nor measure to what flatters their senses, for they deny themselves nothing.

II. *It is a very pernicious vice.*

Religion obliges us to submit the flesh to the spirit, and intemperance gives strength to the flesh to revolt against the spirit. This vice, however gross, does not in general alarm the conscience, though it is condemned by the law of God, and is in opposition to the spirit of piety. "I have triumphed," said St. Augustine, at the commencement of his conversion, "over all the vices that have separated me from God; I have broken my criminal engagements; I have subdued the pride and presumption of my heart by the yoke of faith; but there is one victory I have yet to gain over myself, and that is, to bring myself to reasonable sobriety."

OCTOBER 9.

ON THE RESPECT WE OWE TO GOD.

I. *We owe him an exterior respect.*

You may imagine that an humble and respectful posture or demeanour has no connexion with the interior dispositions of the heart ; but our soul being united to our body by incomprehensible ties, has a natural disposition to humble itself with the body. Jesus Christ prostrated himself in the Garden of Olives, before his heavenly Father ; and his prayer was accompanied with every exterior mark of humility and respect.—The Scripture says, one of the greatest crimes of Antiochus was, his entering into the temple of the Lord with a proud and haughty countenance.

II. *We owe God an interior respect.*

The Lord is really present in our temples in the holy Eucharist. With what sentiments of respect and fear should not a Christian be filled in his presence! He

dwells there to hear our prayers, and receive our homage ; he is most jealous of our heart, and can we refuse it to him without a crime ? “ My spirit,” he said, in speaking of the temple of Jerusalem, “ is there every day.” It is but just then that our eyes should honour him by their modesty and our heart by its sentiments.

OCTOBER 10.

ON THE OFFICES OF THE CHURCH.

I. *The greater part of them is composed of the Psalms of David.*

Endeavour to comprehend the sense of them, and you will see that it is not only a man, but the Holy Spirit, that has dictated them. They express not only the sentiments of David, but also those of Jesus Christ, and of the Church, and of every faithful soul. There is no city that may not become a sinful and perfidious Jerusalem ; no sinner that may not become a penitent David ; no child that

may not become rebellious and unnatural, like Absalom, if God forsake him.

II. *Apply the sense of the Psalms to yourself.*

"If they present to you," says St. Augustine, "the picture of an afflicted soul, and contain an invitation to tears and compunction, suffer yourself to indulge a salutary sorrow: *Si gemit Psalmus, gemit*; if you recite canticles of thanksgiving, give way to transports of gratitude: *Si gratulatur, gaudete*; if they be filled with motives of hope, set no limits to yours: *Si sperat, sperate*."

OCTOBER 11.

ON THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

I. *This sacrifice is the renewal and continuation of the sacrifice on the cross, and consequently the consummation of all the sacrifices of the Old Law.*

There were four different kinds of sacrifice: First, the Holocaust, which was offered to God as an homage to his sove-

reign greatness. Second, the sacrifice of expiation, that was offered to appease his justice. Third, the sacrifice of impetration, which was offered to implore his bounty. Fourth, the Eucharistic sacrifice, which was offered to thank him for his benefits. The Mass is a holocaust which the Church offers to God as an homage to his greatness and power: a sacrifice of expiation to appease his justice; a sacrifice of impetration to solicit his bounty; and an Eucharistic sacrifice, which she offers to him in thanksgiving for all his favours.

II. *The dispositions we should have in hearing Mass, in reference to the object of those different sacrifices.*

The Holycaust demands a spirit of humility; the sacrifice of expiation, a spirit of penance, of compunction and sorrow; the sacrifice of impetration, a spirit of fervour and submission; the Eucharistic sacrifice, a spirit of love and gratitude. When we believe with a lively faith in

the holy sacrifice of the Mass, how can we ever be tempted to complain of its length?

OCTOBER 12.

ON THE VICTIM OFFERED IN THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

I. *The victim is Jesus Christ.*

St. Paul exhorts us to study and imitate all the qualities of his sacrifice. Let us reflect attentively on every circumstance of them. He does not sacrifice himself to strange gods, but to his heavenly Father; he offers himself freely, voluntarily, and entirely. He sacrifices himself every day, publicly and openly.

II. *Imitate every circumstance of his sacrifice.*

Do not sacrifice yourself to the strange gods of this world, and your passions; but to the Lord of heaven and earth. Offer him your heart and soul without reserve or murmuring. Sacrifice yourself to him entirely every day and every mo-

ment of your life, without fearing the remarks or censures of an unjust world.

OCTOBER 13.

ON THE HOMAGE WE PAY TO GOD BY SACRIFICE.

I. *It is an homage of annihilation.*

For the victim is destroyed and consumed in the sacrifice. We say to God by a significant action: "Lord, all being, all substance has been created by your hands, and subsists only by your divine will; you can destroy and bring to nothing all things when you please. I acknowledge my own nothingness in your sight; I am before you as if I were not: *Substantia mea tanquam nihilum ante te.*

What shall I do when I assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass? I will prostrate myself before a God on whom I depend for all things. I will expect every thing from him alone. I will adore him and humble myself in his divine presence.

II. *The difference between sacrifice and prayer.*

In prayer we elevate our minds to God in adoration and praise ; by sacrifice we humble ourselves before him in acknowledgment of our own nothingness. If prayer ought to be accompanied with a profound humility, as it is a confession of our weakness, how much more should we annihilate ourselves by sacrifice, which is a solemn and public confession of our nothingness !

OCTOBER 14.

ON THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS AS A SACRIFICE OF EXPIATION.

I. *It is the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, who has effaced the sins of the world.*

Sinner, it is for you the altar is raised : *Pro te mensa mysterii extructa est.* For you this lamb is immolated : *Pro te agnus immolatur.* For you the priest solicits and prays : *Pro te angitur sacerdos.* You are the culpable being for whom he

implores mercy, and the blood of the lamb which is offered on the altar is the pledge and price of your redemption.

II. • *You should assist at this holy sacrifice with all the dispositions of a contrite and grateful heart.*

With a contrite heart, for your contrition is the bond of that reconciliation which is treated of between God and you, in this adorable sacrifice. The precious blood of Jesus will never heal the wounds of your soul if you have not a sincere sorrow for your sins. You should acknowledge your gratitude to God, whom you have so often offended, and praise his mercy, who, instead of revenging your infidelities, offers himself daily as a victim of propitiation for your sins.

OCTOBER 15.

ON ZEAL.

I. *We should be zealous for the salvation and perfection of our neighbour; but this zeal should be well regulated, and should*

commence by the reformation of our own lives.

It is the essential order of charity that we labour for our own salvation and perfection in preference to all others; for this reason zeal has but three objects in view: the first is God, the second is ourselves, the third is our neighbour. God, whom we ought to love above all things; our own soul, which we should love next to God; and our neighbour, whom we should love as ourselves.—We reverse the order of charity when our zeal places in the second rank an object that belongs to the third in what regards God and our salvation.

II. Our zeal will have no effect if we do not reform ourselves.

The greatest of all errors is to think that others will follow our advice or profit by our instructions, when our own conduct is reprehensible in every respect, and when we are the first to disavow in practice what we so strongly recommend.

If sinners be alarmed at their state by our reproofs, they will be encouraged by our giving them bad example.

OCTOBER 16.

ON THE MARKS OF TRUE ZEAL.

I. *It should be regulated by wisdom,* according to the condition of persons, their state in life, their characters and their talents. We should bear with their weakness and prejudices to lead them to religion, when we can do so without injury to piety, or neglecting our own duty; not confounding condescension with weakness, nor firmness with rigour. We must be contented with persons doing well, without expecting that perfection from them which might be dangerous to urge. We must attack abuses with resolution when circumstances require it, and quietly counteract them when we cannot publicly abolish them.

II. *Zeal should be regulated by moderation and circumspection, to make it*

pleasing to God, and useful to our neighbour.

False zeal is impatient, rash, violent, cruel, and vindictive ; true zeal, regulated by charity, is gentle, humble, patient, without ambition, interest, or bitterness, rejoicing in good, and opposing evil for the love of virtue alone.

OCTOBER 17.

OUR ZEAL IS DEFECTIVE WHEN WE DO NOT
REGULATE OUR OWN LIVES.

I. It is vicious in its principle.

The least we can say of it is, that it arises from pride and vanity. We wish to appear zealous, and make the world believe that we love virtue and hate vice ; we wish to raise ourselves above others that we may exercise the right we think we have of reproving them.

II. It is always sterile and unfruitful.

What advantage is it to us to show others the way of virtue if we do not follow it ourselves—to reform abuses that

are less dangerous than those we give the example of—to procure good for others and follow evil ourselves—to be severe and inexorable when they neglect their duties, and not to fulfil one of our own?

OCTOBER 18.

ON PASSIONATE ZEAL.

I. *It has all the appearance of true zeal, and is often mistaken for it.*

We often deceive ourselves, and think we are actuated by zeal, when we only act from a restlessness of character and humour, often the result of envy, ambition, or interest. Envy deplores faults, yet is gratified in remarking them; ambition appears zealous in reproving them, and interest finds a thousand means of discovering them.

II. *How we may distinguish true zeal from criminal and passionate zeal.*

Here you must enter into yourselves, and learn to know the secret movements

of your own hearts. Are you accustomed to subdue your passions, to stifle your resentments, your jealousies, and dislikes? If you have acquired this happy control over yourself, you can answer for the purity of your zeal; but if you are yet habitually subject to your passions, you have reason to doubt yourself, and you will perceive through the fine colours that disguise false zeal, the artifices of ambition, the malignity of envy, the faults of humour, and the vices of your character.

OCTOBER 19.

ON IMPATIENT ZEAL.

I. *When it is even laudable in its motives, it becomes vicious in its effects.*

We desire that the moment we speak every person would be changed, all abuses reformed, all disorders repressed, and all passions subject to the rules of reason and religion; and when our zealous efforts will not succeed as promptly

and completely as we wish, we are vexed and irritated against those who will not submit; we do them all the ill we think they merit, and wish them even more than is in our power to inflict.

II. *Impatience destroys the merit of zeal, because it is contrary to the Spirit of God.*

When the two disciples of Jesus Christ asked him to cause fire to come down from heaven to consume the city of the Samaritans, he said to them: "You believe you are animated by the spirit of God; but you deceive yourselves; your own passions, a spirit of bitterness and vengeance, inspire you with so barbarous a design. I see not in you a zeal coming from God, but a zeal as of revengeful men."

OCTOBER 20.

ON THE STUDY OF THE LAW OF GOD.

I. *Study the law of God.*

Make it the rule of your conduct through life: do not content yourself with

a vague and superficial knowledge of it. Study it to know the extent of your baptismal obligations.—Study it for the rule of your occupations; to fix the time you should give to the public exercises of religion and private devotion; to learn the time your station in life requires you to give to society and the world; what benevolence requires from you, and what you should give in charity and alms: in a word, study the law of God for your own sanctification, as if this divine law had been made and published for your sake alone.

II. *Study the law of God to practise it.*

The more instructed you are, the more culpable will you also be if you violate the commandments of God. If we be culpable in neglecting instruction, how much more guilty are we when we know our duties and do not fulfil them!—"Those who know the law of God," says the apostle St. James, "without practising it, are like a man who looks at his face

in the glass and sees it covered with stains, and neglects to wash it." The law of God is a faithful mirror that shows us ourselves—what we are, what we are not, and what we should be.

OCTOBER 21.

ON THE TREASURE OF THE HEART.

I. *This treasure is the object to which our heart is attached.*

However variable the inclinations of the heart, we can easily discover its ruling passion and inclination. "For where your treasure is," says Jesus Christ, "there also is your heart." Each individual has his treasure on earth: one places it in grandeur and opulence: another in pleasure, reputation, and science: to these things alone their heart is attached. These are the treasures that occupy all their thoughts, and absorb all their sentiments.

II. *God alone is the treasure of the true Christian.*

Those who place their treasure in the goods of this world, seek not God in them. He should be the only treasure of our hearts; in him alone the true Christian finds repose, joy, and happiness, and accounts as nothing the goods which time consumes and death destroys, and habit renders insipid. The only true good which he knows and desires is, that God who is on earth the object of his love, and who will in heaven be his reward.

OCTOBER 22.

ON TRUE LIBERTY.

I. *The wicked enjoy only an apparent liberty.*

What is the liberty of the world but a shameful slavery that blinds its followers, and makes them insensible to the weight of their chains, and the knowledge of their miseries? It never allows them to think of their present state, nor reflect on what may be their future lot. They seek for happiness in the pleasures and

tumults of the world, and strive with its weak assistance to forget that they are mortal. They live not for themselves, but are the slaves of others.

II. *True liberty is found only in virtue.*

Those who attach themselves to the service of God, and overcome the tyranny of their passions, are alone free; they are not slaves to the caprices of the world; they fear neither adversity nor death; depending entirely on God for all things, he proves to them that "his yoke is sweet, and his burden light."—Assisted by his divine grace, they find nothing impossible that tends to the advancement of his honour and glory; with his love, everything is pleasing to them, and with the hope of eternal happiness they are recompensed for all their labours.

OCTOBER 23.

ON THE DEVOTION OF SENTIMENT.

I. *There is a devotion of reason and a devotion of sentiment.*

The one attaches us to the duties of religion from a conviction of their importance; the other from the peace of mind and happiness we experience in practising them. This difference is sensible in the two principal exercises of piety, *communion and prayer*. In *prayer*: we pray from reason, when we are convinced that this holy exercise is an indispensable obligation; we pray from a devotion of sentiment, when we feel ourselves, as it were, transported from earth to heaven; we love it because it raises us above all earthly objects which hinder us from thinking of God. The hours we employ in speaking to our Creator and our Father appear to us but moments.

II. *In communion.*

Those who are conducted to the holy table by devotion of reason, go to obey the commands of Jesus Christ, who says: "Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of man, you shall not have life in you."

They prove and purify themselves before they approach, because this proving of themselves is absolutely necessary.— Others go to this mysterious festival with souls that hunger and thirst after justice ; they prepare themselves every day and every hour of their lives. The ineffable happiness which they find in the union of their souls with Jesus Christ, repays them for all the sacrifices they daily make, to be in a state worthy to receive this divine food.

OCTOBER 24.

ON THE DEVOTION OF PREFERENCE AND OF
SACRIFICE.

I. *This consists in the habitual practice of the law of God.*

This may supply the devotion of sentiment. You may not at all times find the same pleasure in the exercise of prayer, or in works of piety, as you would in profane reading or worldly amusement ; yet you perform these good works even when

you have neither taste nor inclination for them, because you are disposed to sacrifice your inclinations to the law of God, even when you do not find any sensible pleasure or satisfaction in doing so. This is the devotion of preference and sacrifice; practise it, and you are in the way of salvation.

II. *The devotion of sentiment cannot supply the want of the devotion of preference or sacrifice.*

If you be not humble, patient, mortified, charitable, and disinterested, your devotion is a mere illusion. This is what Jesus Christ would make us understand when he said: "Not every one who says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he who doth the will of my father who is in heaven."—False and deceitful devotion consists in affectionate, but fruitless words. The only devotion that is genuine, solid, and essential, is, to study and faithfully accomplish the law of the Lord.

OCTOBER 25.

ON THE DESIRE OF THE DEVOTION OF SENTIMENT.

I. *This devotion is a grace we should always desire.*

Shall we make no effort to acquire it, under the pretext that it is not absolutely necessary for salvation? Shall we lavish on sensible objects all that we call taste, inclination, and feeling; and remain satisfied by merely having the courage to prefer our duties to our pleasures? How should we not be afflicted and humbled at feeling only the yoke of religion without its sweets and consolations!

II. *The means of acquiring the devotion of sentiment.*

This devotion is a grace, and we must ask it from the "Author of all grace and of every perfect gift." We must subdue by every means in our power all attachment to terrestrial goods and objects, and that lively and fatal impression which

makes us despise the treasure of grace, and learn to be faithful in everything connected with the service of God. This precious grace is only granted to the most constant and exact fidelity.

OCTOBER 26.

ON THE PRIVATION OF THE DEVOTION OF
SENTIMENT.

I. *This privation is sometimes sent as a trial.*

The greatest saints, and even those who have most known the attractions of piety, have not always experienced the devotion of sentiment. God, to humble them, and prove their virtue, has sometimes removed this celestial grace which they loved so much, and ceased to behold them with that complacency which filled them with joy. Yet they supported this trial with constancy, and never relaxed from the practice of all their duties, always observing the same fidelity, though

they did not experience the same pleasures.

II. *This privation is often the effect of our unfaithfulness :*

Particularly when it becomes general, and when we must make a painful and continual effort to excite ourselves to practise the exercises of piety ; when we take no pains to raise ourselves from this slothful and melancholy state, or when we feel neither sorrow nor regret for it.

OCTOBER 27.

ON THE PERFECT OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW
OF GOD.

I. *"If you observe all the law of God," says the Apostle St. James, "and violate one point, you are guilty of all."*

Because you are really in the disposition to break all the points of the law, having the inclination to commit sin. You say to God : "Open to me the door of avarice ; let me love riches, and I

will sacrifice to you my love of vengeance. Leave me the object of my desires, and I will give up my envy and ambition." You will give up your inclinations, if God will change the sacrifice. Avarice renounces riches to be vindictive, and voluptuousness gives up pleasure to be avaricious.

II. *We reverse the foundation of the obedience we owe to the law.*

This obedience is founded on the love of preference we owe to God. On this great precept we are obliged to give him the first place in our hearts. All the sacrifices we could offer him to purchase the right of retaining one of our passions, are proofs of the empire they have over us, and, consequently, are a visible usurpation of the rights of God, to whom we owe a love that will suffer neither division nor exception.

OCTOBER 28.

ON RELAPSING INTO SIN.

I. *"Go," said the Saviour, "and sin no more;" for relapse into sin is often the mark of false repentance.*

When it is prompt, and there is no interval between penitence and sin; when no precaution is used to prevent a relapse; when it is frequent, and the same faults are repeated; when it is followed with no remorse; and when the sinner is as tranquil in his sin, as if he had not promised God to renounce it for ever.

II. *If you have relapsed into sin, you should not forsake the sacrament of penance.*

For that will lead to final impenitence. One relapse produces another; one sin opens the way for committing another. The life of a sinner becomes an unbroken chain of crimes and disorders.—Each day produces new crimes and excesses of libertinism; always at war

with God, always rebellious to his commandments, he accumulates debt on debt, without discharging any; he destroys himself, he is lost without resource. "If the just man fall seven times," says the wise man, "he raises himself again." It is by this means he becomes just, and acquires at length the habit of falling no more.

OCTOBER 29.

ON THE ENGAGEMENTS OF BAPTISM.

I. In what those engagements consist.

We promise in receiving baptism to renounce Satan, the enemy of God and man, the father of idolatry, the chief of devils. To renounce his works, which are the works of darkness, and all kind of sin. To renounce the world and all its pomps, its vanities, and bad examples. These are our vows which we have promised to observe every day of our lives, and on these conditions we are Christians.

II. Those conditions are irrevocable.

Though we may deny them by our con-

duct, the obligations they impose on us always remain. Kings are not dispensed from observing them, for no one can be saved who is not a Christian, and no one can be a Christian who has not received baptism, or desired it; and no one receives or desires baptism without contracting those engagements.

OCTOBER 30.

ON THE ALLIANCE CHRISTIANS CONTRACT WITH
GOD BY THE ENGAGEMENTS OF BAPTISM.

I. *These engagements form between God and us a bond of alliance, although others answer in our name.*

Is not the inviolable engagement which binds subjects to their Sovereign included in that which others, the principal members of the state, contract with him in the name of the entire? Yes, we are bound by this oath from our infancy, and shall we be less bound to the King of heaven by engagements others have made for us in baptism, when we were unable to

answer for ourselves, than by those we make ourselves to an earthly king?

II. *Worldlings account their baptismal engagements as nothing.*

They imagine that to be irrevocably engaged to God, they must enter into the priesthood or the religious state. In this they deceive themselves. Every time they renounce the service of God to gratify their passions, it may be justly said to them: "You have violated your vows; you have been unfaithful to your engagements and promises."

OCTOBER 31.

ON THE CONSECRATION OF A CHRISTIAN AT BAPTISM.

I. Baptism consecrates us as *kings*, for it gives us a right to one of the thrones which the Son of God has prepared for us in the kingdom of heaven; as *temples of God*, for it makes us fit to receive the Son of God by the communion of his precious body and blood; as *children of God*, for it is the sign of our adoption; and as

members of Jesus Christ, for we are united to his mystical body, the Church.

II. The obligations this consecration imposes on us.

With what purity of manners and fervent charity are we not obliged to support these glorious titles! We profane, disgrace, and dishonour the consecration by which we are sanctified in baptism, when we forget the noble sentiments by which we should be filled, and enter into the abyss of iniquity and the infinite baseness of the spirit of the world. Let us remember that we are a holy nation, a chosen people, the brothers and coheirs of Jesus Christ, and that being once consecrated to God in baptism, we cannot violate our engagements without committing a kind of sacrilege.

NOVEMBER 1.

ON THE END WE SHOULD PROPOSE TO OURSELVES IN ALL OUR ACTIONS.

I. We should have a good intention in all our actions.

We often act from humour, custom, or caprice, without any motive or reasonable design, doing all by chance. We are carried away by vain thoughts, like a vessel floating before the wind. Such conduct is unworthy of a reasonable being, and much more of a Christian, who knows that his religion forbids all idle thoughts, words, and actions, that is, those that are referred to no good end.

II. In all our actions our intentions should be laudable and worthy of God.

It is not enough that an action be good in itself, but it must be done from a good motive. St. Paul says, that in his day some preached the gospel through a spirit of charity, and some through a spirit of contention and jealousy. The action was holy in itself; but different motives made it good in the one, and bad in the other. Resolve, then, neither to speak, act, nor labour, but for God. The smallest action becomes great, and the most indifferent

becomes holy, when He is their motive and object.

NOVEMBER 2.

ON PRACTICAL FAITH.

I. *Speculative faith is not sufficient for salvation.*

We believe the mysteries of religion by speculative faith ; we observe its precepts by practical faith. "Go," said the Saviour to his Apostles, "and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," that they may believe the mysteries : and, he added, "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded," that to speculative faith they may add practical faith, without which they cannot be saved. In this union consists that plenitude of faith spoken of by St. Paul : *In plenitudine fidei.*

II. *Practical faith is much more rare than speculative faith.*

It is true we daily see the rapid progress of infidelity ; yet there are a great

number who have not renounced their faith in the mysteries of religion; but how few in comparison practise its moral rules in all their integrity! Alas! the number is very few; and this is the number of the elect. Who is there that is not more attached to the goods of this life than to those of the future? Who is there that does not on a thousand occasions prefer the interests of his self-love to the desire of pleasing God?

NOVEMBER 3.

ON OUR DAILY ACTIONS.

I. *Our pious exercises should have the first place in our daily actions.*

The beginning and end of the day should be dedicated to these exercises. In the morning we should beg of God grace to acquit ourselves faithfully of all our duties, and let no opportunity escape us of doing good; the grace of avoiding sin, and the temptations of the flesh and the world. In the evening let us examine

ourselves by recalling to our minds the faults we have committed. How can a Christian let one day pass without thinking of God and his salvation?

II. *We should acquit ourselves of these exercises with fidelity, respect, and fervour.*

Fidelity consists in never neglecting this duty. How can a man be so occupied with the world as not to find one moment either at the beginning or close of the day to raise his heart to God? These exercises are directly and immediately referred to God; it is to him we speak, and with him we treat; let us humble ourselves before him, saying, like Abraham, "I who am but dust and ashes, am about to speak to my God." What fruit can we hope for from these exercises when we perform them with coldness and indifference?

NOVEMBER 4.

ON CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD, REGARDING OUR NATURAL TALENTS.

I. *We often feel a secret envy at others possessing talents which we have not.*

Saul was jealous of the merit of David, and this bad feeling was the cause of his ruin. Be contented with the talents God has given you, and never envy others what they have received. Pray that his holy will may be the rule of your desires. Lord! all things come from your hands, and consequently we should bless and praise you. It is your divine spirit that bestows all graces and talents; distribute them as you please: it belongs not to us to seek into the depths of your judgments, nor censure the order of your providence.

II. *The surest way of obtaining a blessing on the talents we possess, is to submit them to the will of God.*

You enkindle the wrath of God by mur-

muring against his will; you will not obtain for yourself the talents you desire, and the Lord, to punish you, will not permit you to reap any advantage from those you possess.

NOVEMBER 5.

ON CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD IN
THE AFFLICTIONS HE SENDS US.

I. *This conformity is our only resource in irreparable evils.*

When strength and human means entirely fail us, when we find no consolation in the company of men, who often augment our sorrow more than dissipate it, to whom shall we have recourse? Let us address ourselves to God. He is "the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation." Let us receive with resignation the afflictions he thinks proper to send us; let us pray to him to heal the wounds of a heart, which is perhaps too strongly attached to the goods and interests of this life, and too insensible to the great truths of religion, and of eternity.



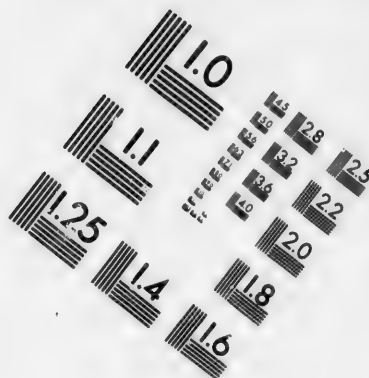
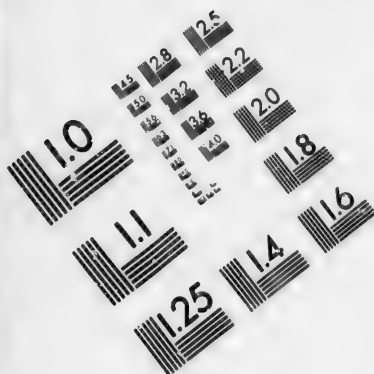
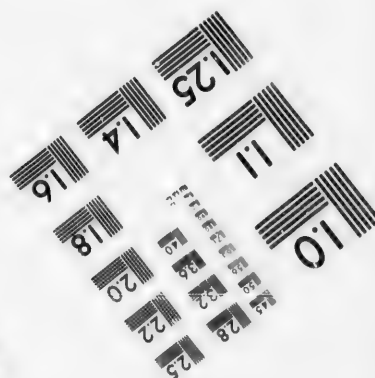
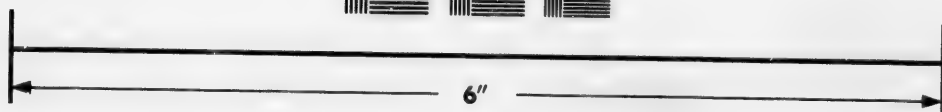
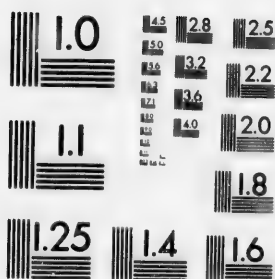


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II. *This conformity should make us more active and vigilant in remedying the evils that may be repaired.*

God does not oblige us to be as beings purely passive, like inanimate and immovable instruments under his hands. It is not opposing his holy will to employ all the care and activity human means may offer us, to free ourselves from the evils that menace and afflict us ; it is rather submitting and conforming ourselves to it. For God, in affording us these means, ordered them expressly to serve us.

NOVEMBER 6.

ON THE GOOD USE WE MAY MAKE OF
SICKNESS.

I. *What are the designs of God in the maladies he sends us ?*

First, to make us know our weakness : second, to detach us from the false goods of this world : third, to recall us to himself : fourth, to diminish the strength and

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impetuosity of our greatest enemy—our flesh : fifth, to familiarize us with death : sixth, to warn us that this world is for us a place of exile, and that heaven is our true country.

II. *What ought to be the sentiments of a Christian during sickness ?*

First, he should have recourse to God to ask him not for health, but grace and pardon for his sins, by a sincere repentance. Second, to submit himself to his holy will with a perfect indifference to health or sickness, life or death, leaving all impatience to others, and submitting entirely to the will of God, expecting health only from his hands. "My son," said the wise man, "do not despair in your infirmity ; but have recourse to God, and you will be healed.

NOVEMBER 7.

ON THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE.

I. *If you would know whether you lead a life conformable to the principles and maxims of religion :*

Examine the general idea St. Paul gives of a Christian life, when he says: "A true Christian has a horror of sin, and is attached to good: *Odientes malum, adhærentes bono*; he is filled with holy solicitude to discharge his duties: *Solitudine non pigri*; he is zealous and active in the practice of every virtue: *Spiritu ferventes*; occupied unceasingly in the service of God: *Domino servientes*; detached from the goods of this world, and seeking only eternal goods, the sole object of his hope: *Spe gaudentes*; patient in adversity: *In tribulatione patientes*; constant in prayer: *Orationi instantes*; charitable to the poor: *Hospitalitatem sectantes*; doing good not only before God, but also before men to edify them: *Providentes bona, non tantum coram Deo, sed etiam coram hominibus*."

II. Apply this general detail to your conduct, and see if you be faithful and attentive in following these principles in the regulation of your family, in the use you

make of your substance, in your diversions, and in the order and practice of your pious exercises.

NOVEMBER 8.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH.

I. *The certainty of death should detach us from life, riches, and the pomps of the world; for if they accompany us to the tomb, they cannot follow us beyond it.*

The honours of the world may decorate the sepulchre, but can confer no distinction on what it contains. Friends, connexions, and even those most dear to us, will, perhaps, soon forget us when we are removed from their sight.

II. *A Christian should regulate every act of his life by the certainty of death.*

Rich and great of this world, you are considered as gods of the earth: *Ego dixi Dii estis et filii excelsi omnes*; yet you will die like the poorest of men: *Verumtamen sicut homines moriemini*.—Attend to this awful truth before you resolve on any

thing ; go, and consult death ; choose what will conduce most to your salvation ; reject what would cause you disquiet, and embrace what will console you on the last day of your life.

NOVEMBER 9.

ON THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH.

I. *This uncertainty should excite our vigilance.*

“Watch,” said the Saviour, “for you know not the day nor the hour.” “God leaves us in this uncertainty,” says St. Augustine, “that we may be ready every moment :” *Latet ultimus dies, ut observentur omnes dies.* If you die in the state of sin, you are lost for ever ; and if you live in that state, you know not but you will die in it.

II. *We will be surprised by death if we are not always prepared.*

Jesus Christ not only says : “Watch, for you know not the day nor the hour,”

but adds: "Watch, for the Son of Man will come at the hour you do not expect him." Those who persevere in the state of sin cannot then say: "I may not be surprised," for they may rest assured they will: Jesus Christ expressly says it. The sinner by delaying his conversion condemns himself, in a certain degree, to a fatal death, and an unhappy eternity.

NOVEMBER 10.

ON THE APPROACH OF DEATH.

I. *We may persuade ourselves that death is distant when it is very near.*

We flatter ourselves with a long life even when we are on the verge of the grave. Many of the great people of the world will not be persuaded they are dying. They deceive themselves on their state, and their flatterers say to them as the devil said to our first parents:—*Nequaquam moriemini*: "you will not die;" and, in order to gratify their weakness, they suffer them to die in impenitence.

II. *To avoid so great a misery, you should have a greater desire for salvation, than fear of death.*

Why do we fear to announce to men that death is near and inevitable? Because we know that they are too much attached to life, and that they have a terror of death. If we were certain that they were prepared, by a holy and fervent life, for that awful change, we would not fear to tell them they were going to "enter into the joy of the Lord."

NOVEMBER 11.

ON THE SENTIMENTS A CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE
AT THE APPROACH OF DEATH.

I. *We find them expressed in the Canticle which Ezechias pronounced when he was seized with a mortal illness.*

We read that he is aware of his approaching death, without betraying any regret for life. "I have completed," he says, "the number of my days; and I know that the end of my life is come,

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one field to another, and that the sentence
pronounced in the council of the Lord,
on the duration of my life, is on the point
of being executed."

II. *He implores the mercy of God by fer-
vent prayer.*

"What shall I do, O my God," he says,
"to prepare myself to appear before you?
I will reflect on the past years of my life
in the bitterness of my soul, I will tremble
like the dove at the sight of my iniquities,
and I will meditate on the depths of your
judgments.—Lord! come to my help; en-
lighten me, support me, that my soul may
not partake of the weakness of my body;
forget my sins, and make me worthy to
praise and bless you, and possess you for
ever in the kingdom of your glory."

NOVEMBER 12.

ON THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE.

I. *Those who have examined the struc-*

ture of the Human Frame, are not astonished at the uncertainty of life.

Our body is formed of so many nerves and veins, necessary for life, so delicate and of so minute a nature, that they are almost incomprehensible in their different movements ; if one be injured, all are affected, and death may ensue. Our life depends on the perfect organization of our body, and on the regular course of so many different humours, that the smallest alteration in them may remove us from life ; our existence may be compared to a flower that blooms and withers in a day.

II. *Our life, properly speaking, is a continual death.*

We die every day : *Quotidie morior* ; each passing moment steals from us a portion of life, and we hourly advance nearer to the grave. "It is an error," said an ancient writer, "to see death in the future :"
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the portion of death : *Quidquid ætatis
retro est, mors tenet.*

NOVEMBER 13.

ON THE FORGETFULNESS OF DEATH.

I. *We often speak of the death of others,
yet never think of our own.*

We see our relations, friends, and neigh-
bours dying every day ; we are convinced
nothing is more certain than death, or
more uncertain than life, and we never
apply these reflections to ourselves ; we
may think of these things, but they make
no lasting impression on us ; we know the
truth of them, but we disregard it.

II. *The death of others often attaches us
more to life.*

Instead of considering that they are
gone to the region of death, where we will
soon follow them, we think only of suc-
ceeding to their situations, dignities, or

property. Alas! while we accompany their funerals with all the exterior marks of sorrow, we are secretly rejoicing that they have left a vacancy for our pretensions, and at the time we should bring to our mind the salutary thought of death, we occupy it with the illusions of life.

NOVEMBER 14.

ON THE DEATH OF SINNERS.

I. *In their last moments they see the uselessness of their cares.*

They have spent their lives in labouring and suffering for a world they are leaving; they looked on the restraint of virtue, and the practice of piety, as a yoke too heavy for their weakness; they had strength and constancy only for the world; they sacrificed their life, their time, and their health, to that fortune which they idolize. It is going now to disappear for ever; and after so much labour and fatigue, nothing remains but

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regret for losing in one moment all that
they have acquired with so much pains.

II. *In their last moments they see the
vanity of their pleasures.*

They have lasted but for a moment ;
there scarcely remains a remembrance of
them, and for these pleasures they have
incurred eternal damnation. If they re-
flect on their past life, it is in the " bitter-
ness of their soul." Their sentiments are
different from those of the dying King
Ezechias, who reflected on the infidelities
of his life to regret and weep for them.
In the one it is a remembrance of peni-
tence and compunction ; in the other it is
a remembrance of despair that consum-
mates their reprobation.

NOVEMBER 15.

ON THE SURPRISE OF SINNERS AT THE HOUR
OF DEATH.

1. *They reject to the last moment the
thought of death.*

Those who surround them, flatter and

deceive them ; some from compassion ; others from fear, complaisance, and a mistaken tenderness. They look on them as dead, and yet they deceive them with a hope of life : no real friend is near them, to tell them the awful truth ; no one is willing to pronounce the fatal sentence which condemns them to death ; they fear to hasten its execution by a cruel and deadly sincerity, and they defer announcing it, until the dying person has hardly a breath of life.

II. *This surprise fills them with fear.*

If they foresee their death, they reject the thought as fatal and importunate.— They know they have committed many sins, and are destitute of good works ; they have never thought of God nor their salvation during their lives, and are, perhaps, forming new projects even in death. What surprise ! what astonishment ! what useless regrets for the past ! What terrors and uncertainty for the future !

NOVEMBER 16.

ON THE SENTIMENTS OF WORLDLINGS AT THE
APPROACH OF DEATH.

I. *They will be separated from all; and they regret the world, more than the world regrets them.*

They regret the world which they always loved, and in which they believed they had established for themselves a lasting city; it is now no more for them; they must leave it, and leave it for ever, yet their heart remains in it, and, though dying by the law of nature, they cannot resolve to die to the world by totally renouncing it.

II. *They regret their goods*, those false, deceitful, and perishable goods, which they heaped together with so much care, and possessed with so much pride; those riches, acquired perhaps by unjust means; or at least by means dangerous to their salvation, and enjoyed even against the reproaches of conscience. Their grand

houses and splendid apartments must be forsaken to descend into the night of the tomb. Of all their possessions, nothing remains for them but a few feet of earth, and the mournful shroud that is to envelop them.

NOVEMBER 17.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE THEY ACQUIRE AT THE
HOUR OF DEATH.

I. *They then learn to know men.*

We find that people are attached to us chiefly through interested motives. We may reckon on their attentions and friendship while we are in any way useful to them; but the moment we can no longer serve them, all their friendship for us vanishes. When the dying man expires, all his pretended friends abandon him, to go, perhaps, to those whom they think will succeed to his fortune, to offer them their adulation and homage.

II. *They learn to know God.*

It is then that God alone appears great

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to them. All other greatness fades be-
fore the eyes of the dying man; that of
God alone subsists eternally. This makes
the most lively and fatal impression on
the sinner; God discovers himself to
him; eternity approaches; another life,
another world, appear before his eyes;
goods and evils hitherto invisible succeed
to those vain trifles that dazzled him in
life, and forsake him in death.

NOVEMBER 18.

ON THE SEPARATION OF THE SOUL FROM THE
BODY.

*I. The body separated from the soul is
laid in the grave to be the food of worms.*

What has the soul gained by having
made such an idol of the body? by flat-
tering it with so much care? by prefer-
ring its comforts and luxuries to immortal
happiness? and pampering with all the
good things of this world, that body that
is now consigned to earth, a frightful

and odious object to the living, and which will be soon reduced to dust and ashes?

II. *The soul separated from the body is carried to the tribunal of God.*

It enters into another world to appear before its Judge, alone, without friends or support. "The soul and its works stand together :" *Homo et opera ejus.* Happy if it be adorned with the works of holiness and justice ! Unhappy if it be destitute of all but works of iniquity ! These are the works which the Saviour will interrogate, and which must answer for us : *Ipse interrogabit opera nostra.*

NOVEMBER 19.

ON THE DEATH OF THE JUST.

I. *The just man leaves the world without regret.*

He has laboured during life to detach his heart from it ; he looked on everything in it as vain and contemptible ; he finds in his last moments the happy effects of these reflections ; he receives the

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recompense of his disengagement; and if he have any earthly ties yet unbroken, he submits all to the will of God. This love of preference which he has always observed, softens the rigour of his sacrifice; if from natural feeling he has a horror of death, grace strengthens him to overcome it

II. *The soul of the just man appears at the tribunal of God with humble confidence.*

His soul is accompanied with good works: *Opera enim illorum sequuntur illos.* It has nothing to fear: if unhappily it was stained with sin, it has expiated them by penance and satisfied the justice of God. Its confidence is founded on the merits of Jesus Christ and the goodness of God. It can say, like the apostle, "I have finished my course—I have kept the faith;" not a barren, dead, or speculative faith, but a laborious and practical faith; I shall now receive a crown of justice from my judge.

NOVEMBER 20.

ON THE CONSOLATIONS OF THE JUST AT THEIR
DEATH.

I. *They look on death, says St. Bernard, as the end of their labours: Requies de labore.*

They have carried their cross; they have suffered privations, contradictions, and trials; but they have lasted only a moment; for life appears but of short duration when it is past. They are now for ever free from tribulation; there are no more trials, nor labours, nor sorrows, nor sighs for them: *Neque luctus, neque clamor erit ultra, quia prima abierunt.* The winter is passed, the storms have ceased, and the dangers are over: *Jam enim hyems transiit, imber abiit et recessit.* After a painful and perilous voyage, death is to them a safe and tranquil harbour.

II. *They look on death as the commencement of their happiness.*

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By death they enter into "the joy of the Lord." Ineffable joy! happiness that surpasseth all understanding! "The eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, nor can the mind of man comprehend it." The soul, disengaged from the body, and possessing its Creator in the plenitude of his divine essence, shall see him without a veil. *Gaudium de novitate*: eternal joy! Happiness which will never end: *Securitas de æternitate*!

NOVEMBER 21.

ON THE GLORY OF THE JUST AT THE HOUR
OF DEATH.

I. *This is the moment of their triumph.*
Sinners only are humbled by death, "by the changes that precede it;" but nothing changes for the just at the hour of death. They always walked in a sure path to eternity. The nearer they approached it, the more their strength and courage increased. They were raised above the world; death could take no-

thing from them, of which they had not already despoiled themselves. They were already dead to the world and to themselves, and their life was hidden with Jesus Christ, in God.

II. *Death humbles sinners by destroying their body.*

This destruction is the glory of the just, who always consider their body as an enemy that must be subdued. It was occupied by the soul but to embellish it with gifts of grace and justice. The moment is come when the soul, ornamented with a thousand virtues, and raised above the body of sin, goes to enjoy in the bosom of God, the glory he has promised it.

NOVEMBER 22.

ON THE INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW OF
GOD.

I. *This law is clear in itself, but our passions conceal its meaning from us.*

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it; some are easy and mitigated, others more just and exact. "What is more clear," says St. Augustine, "than the sun, when he appears not obscured with clouds?" Yet a blind man does not see him. He remains in darkness, for the obscurity is in himself, not in the sun that enlightens the earth. It is the same with the law of God: if it appears obscure to you, it is yourself, or your heart, blinded by your perverseness, that causes this obscurity. Purify your heart from your bad passions, and you will be enlightened.

II. *The proof of this truth is, the more we subdue ourselves, the less obscurity we shall see in the law of God; our knowledge will increase, as our passions diminish.*

We easily see the true meaning of the law that does not control our passions. An avaricious man sees the condemnation of the voluptuary in the gratification of infamous pleasures; and the voluptuary who seeks to palliate his weak-

ness, is at no loss to find the condemnation of the avaricious.

NOVEMBER 23.

ON PARDONING INJURIES.

I. *It is not sufficient to be disposed to pardon great injuries.*

Violent outrages, or great insults, seldom occur. Our entire life might pass without having occasion to observe the precept of the Lord, if it were limited to the forgiveness of great injuries. God expects from us that we will sacrifice our dislikes, and the secret aversions we nourish in our hearts, against those whose temper and dispositions are displeasing to us. He commands us to pardon those daily contradictions and trifling offences we meet with through life. "Charity bears all things," says the apostle, "and returns good for evil."

II. *This pardon is indispensable.*

For, according to the words of Jesus Christ, mercy is promised only to the

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merciful. We daily ask pardon for our sins from God, who will not grant it unless we pardon others. He rejects the offering made at his altar, by a heart filled with hatred; but he will receive the vows and homage of a charitable heart, and when we pray for those who injure or offend us, we offer an agreeable prayer for ourselves.

NOVEMBER 24.

ON THE ONE THING NECESSARY.

I. *This one thing necessary is the salvation of our soul; compared to it, all is nothing.*

Life passes away—eternity remains.—The body dies; but the soul lives forever. We should, therefore, neither desire nor wish for any thing, but what may secure our salvation. This is the point to which we should direct all our thoughts, and all the affections of our heart, for salvation is our sovereign good, our only good, and our last end. There are un-

doubtedly a thousand other goods in the world which may appear in some sense necessary, but their necessity is always subordinate to our salvation; they should be considered evils if they interfere with our spiritual advancement, and can only be called good if they conduce to it.

II. It follows, then, that there is no affliction so cruel, nor loss so severe, which I should not bear with patience, provided it does not affect my salvation. There is no evil in the world I should fear so much or hate so much as sin, which opposes my salvation. There is no temptation so strong nor so powerful that I would not surmount with courage by making this reflection:—"My salvation is here at stake."

NOVEMBER 25.

ON LOVING OUR ENEMIES.

I. "*Love your enemies.*" *What is the meaning of this precept?*

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our enemies is not a love of sympathy, inclination, tenderness, or sentiment: such a love is natural, and that which God requires from us for our enemies is above all natural love. It consists in subduing all hatred and aversion that may rise in our minds against them; in forgiving them as God forgives us when we return to him; in rejecting every idea of the evil they have done us, as we would reject every thought contrary to purity. To have for our enemies that universal charity that embraces all men, in Jesus Christ, to wish them well, and do them every service as if they had never injured us.

II. *This precept has nothing in it contrary to the general good of society.*

It does not prevent those in public authority from punishing offenders; they exercise only the vengeance of the law: but it interdicts private vengeance, which is the manifest abuse of authority. It does not forbid a lawful recourse to human justice; but it forbids an applica-

tion for it, without real necessity, or from a mere sentiment of revenge or hatred.

NOVEMBER 26.

ON VENGEANCE.

I. *The law of God forbids all desire of personal vengeance.*

We seldom revenge ourselves by murder or outrage; there is a secret and concealed vengeance which we often indulge. We revenge ourselves by raillery, calumny, and detraction, and malicious reports that excite the anger of others. We revenge ourselves by an affected forgetfulness, a refusal, a want of attention or regard, and often by a look, an air of coldness, indifference, or neglect. These different sins we should examine into, and accuse ourselves of in confession.

II. *This law appears severe, but it comes from God: Hec est voluntas Dei.*

This is the command and the will of our Sovereign Master. *Ego autem dico vobis: diligite inimicos vestros: I say to you,*

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love your enemies, and never revenge yourselves; be always disposed to pardon the injuries you receive. It is only a God who can expect from us so great a sacrifice; and he expects it. "I say to you!" Here is a word that captivates our obedience. Oppose to this "I," all the pretexts you employ to authorize revenge, and you will find in this one word a superior and ruling power that answers all.

NOVEMBER 27.

ON THE DESIRE OF SALVATION.

I. *Qualities of this desire.*

A true Christian labours only to save his soul; it is his first and chief concern. He seeks for nothing but his salvation. All the perishable and false treasures of this mortal life are as nothing compared to it.

II. *This desire of salvation should be the constant subject of our prayers.*

When you ask anything of God but

salvation, your prayer should be conditional and submissive; but when you pray for salvation, your prayer should be without restriction; for you may be assured your demand is conformable to the will of God. You do not say to him: "Save me, Lord! if my salvation be conformable to your will;" but you say: "Save me, Lord! and listen to the desire I have for salvation; for I know it is a holy desire you have inspired me with."

NOVEMBER 28.

ON THE DIFFICULTY OF SALVATION.

I. *Jesus Christ has not concealed it from us.*

He has said to us that the way to heaven is narrow and difficult; and that we must offer continual violence to ourselves if we would walk in it. The most part of men are terrified at the maxims of the gospel, because they have not grace to know and follow them. Yet what difficulties will they not surmount to possess

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the goods of this world ! The idle become active, and undergo every painful labour to procure them ; the weak become strong and courageous, and suffer perils and hardships ; the simple become industrious, and employ every artifice to succeed in worldly affairs.

II. *Grace has more power to conduct us to salvation than the world has to withdraw us from it.*

Let us remember that what is "impossible to man is possible to God," and that in all things he can fortify us. "Come to me, (he says,) all you that labour and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you." Come to me, weak and sinful man, who bend under the weight of your iniquities, who tremble at the multitude of your sins, and who are terrified at the greatness of your duties, and you will find "my yoke is sweet, and my burden light;" because you do not carry it alone, for I shall employ the strength of my all-powerful arm to help and support you.

NOVEMBER 29.

ON THE CONFESSION OF SINS.

I. *Confession is absolutely necessary, except in a case where it is absolutely impossible.*

No sin is pardoned if it be not confessed. It is in the sacrament of penance mercy and truth meet together: *Misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi*. The sinner goes there to seek mercy, and finds it; but he must accuse himself of his sins with the exactest truth. If he deceive the minister of the Lord, he deceives himself; in vain he implores the mercy of God, if he be guilty of falsehood. He cannot be reconciled to God if he be not sincere; he only increases the number of his sins, or if he conceal or disguise those he has committed, he tells a lie to God, in the person of his minister.

II. *Confession is not always exact and sincere.*

The devil cannot raise a greater ob-

stacle to the effects of God's mercy, than to arrest truth in the mouth of a sinner.—“Why hath Satan tempted thy heart,” said the apostle St. Peter, to Ananias, “that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost;” and immediately the unhappy man fell dead at his feet. Awful figure of a sinner who inflicts death on his soul by concealing his sins !

NOVEMBER 30.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SINS WE HAVE
COMMITTED.

I. *We are ignorant of them because we neglect to know them.*

And “this negligence,” said St. Bernard, “may have two principles.” The first is indifference: *Sciendi incuria*. Those who act in the affairs of the world, spare neither study nor application of mind to attain the most perfect knowledge of them. But they act by a contrary rule in regard to the true state of their conscience; they have no anxiety

nor uneasiness concerning it. The second is idleness : *discendi desidia*. They live in continual dissipation of mind, without reflection or attention to what passes in their heart, or examining into their thoughts, words, or actions. They find it more accommodating to present themselves at the tribunal of penance, without taking the least pains to acquire a knowledge of their sins.

II. *We are ignorant of them, because we fear to know them.*

This chiefly concerns the sins connected with our predominant passion and self-love. Our conscience would perceive these sins if it were enlightened ; but we engage it in our sins when we have not strength to resist its lights. It is a witness we corrupt, an accomplice we silence, a censor we gain over and appease, and we know how to render it blind and complaisant.

DECEMBER 1.

ON THE FORGETFULNESS OF SINS IN CONFESSION.

I. *We sometimes fail to accuse ourselves in confession, because we forget our sins, and this forgetfulness is culpable when it is voluntary in its principle.*

For although we are not accountable to God for the defects of our memory, it often happens that it is defective through our own fault: for instance, when we seldom examine our consciences, when we do so in a superficial manner, or when we are satisfied with casting a mere glance on the numberless sins which result from a worldly and dissipated life.

II. *We should not, however, in order to avoid this forgetfulness, carry our examination to an excess.*

God is too just to hold us accountable for a forgetfulness that is purely involuntary, and which arises solely from the weakness and frailty of our memory.

He undoubtedly wishes that we should examine our conscience with all the care and attention of which we are capable ; but he requires nothing beyond a just and reasonable degree of this attention.

DECEMBER 2.

ON TRUE AND FALSE PIETY.

I. *True piety is humble ; false piety is proud. One shrinks from fame and praise ; the other seeks and desires it.*

True piety loves to be unknown and forgotten ; on the contrary, false piety shows itself everywhere, dislikes obscurity, and desires to be known. True piety finds real happiness in pleasing our heavenly Father, "who sees all things, in secret ;" false piety wishes to attract public attention, and is more gratified with human praise than in pleasing God.

II. *True piety is disinterested ; false piety is always occupied with its own interest :*

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sacrifice. True piety is the same at all
times ; false piety accommodates itself
to the vices that reign in the places
which it resorts : for instance, the court
being the abode of politics, ambition, and
intrigue, false devotion becomes proud,
insinuating, artificial, and political.

DECEMBER 3.

ON SOLID PIETY.

*I. It is founded on the exact discharge
of all Christian duties, according to every
one's station in life.*

Many deceive themselves in thinking
that solid devotion consists in a variety
of exterior practices of devotion, which
may distinguish them from the generality
of the faithful ; this is an error. If you
wish to be solidly pious, commence by
being a good Christian, commence by
loving God above all things, and your
neighbour as yourself ; employ your time

and talents for the glory of God, and fulfil with the greatest exactness all the duties of your state of life. To desire to be devout without being a good Christian, is "like building on sand;" it is raising an edifice that has neither foundation nor solidity.

II. *Solid piety is not always found even in those who make a profession of piety.*

We sometimes see persons neglecting the counsels and precepts of the gospel, who have renounced the pleasures and comforts of life; but have not renounced their own will, nor their passions; who honour Jesus Christ in his temples, and persecute him in his members; who offer unceasingly acts of love and adoration to God, and are guilty of real acts of hatred and vengeance towards their neighbour. They are zealous for the worship of God, and are rebellious to his holy will.

DECEMBER 4.

ON THE DIFFERENCE OF PRAYER.

I. *There are four different kinds of prayer. The prayer of the mind, of the heart, of the word, and of works.*

The first consists in meditating on the truths of salvation; it is an application of the mind, to reflect on all that relates to the glory of God and his service. The second is made by affection and sentiment; it is a prayer that attaches the heart to God by acts of faith, hope, and love, by acts of confidence and submission to his divine will. The third is called vocal prayer; we use it to awaken the attention of the mind and the sentiments of the heart; if this attention be wanted, we may speak for hours without uttering a single prayer. The fourth is performing good works for the glory and honour of God.

II. *Excellence of the prayer of works.*

St. Augustine says, that "those who

know how to pray well, know how to live ;" and we may truly say that those who live well pray well ; for all the exterior occupations which God commands us to do, far from being obstacles to the holy exercise of prayer, are in themselves acceptable prayers which will obtain for us the mercy of God, and incline him to be propitious to us. The kingdom of heaven is not gained by words, but by works ; for the angel said to Tobias, that he " presented his works of charity at the throne of God," as a pleasing perfume.

DECEMBER 5.

ON THE SUCCESS OF OUR PRAYERS.

I. *It often happens when we ask a favour from God which appears just to us, that he does not grant it.*

We must examine if our sins, or the defects in our prayer, be not the cause. " We know," said the blind man healed by Jesus Christ, " that God hears not sinners ;" see, then, if you be not attached to

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II. If our petition be not granted, and
 we may reasonably suppose we are not
 guilty of those faults, we may rest assured
 that the Lord knows, better than we do,
 what is for our advantage, and that it is
 for us to ask, and for him to answer our
 requests ; not according to our desires,
 which are short-sighted, but according to
 his superior views, and adorable wisdom.

DECEMBER 6.

ON PRIDE.

I. *Blindness of pride.*

"I am not like the rest of men," cries
 out the proud man. Do not deceive your-
 self ; you are in all respects like the rest
 of men. You are formed of the same
 dust, and you will return to it ;—your
 pride deceives and blinds you. You have

the same passions and weakness, and if any distinction raise you above them, it is not from your own personal merit, but from the opinion of other men, or from what we may call the caprice or chance of fortune.

II. *The injustice of pride.*

Of what are men proud? If it be of birth, that is supposing no merit in descendants, and acknowledging themselves illustrious only from the greatness of their ancestors. If it be of wit or talent, *that* may appear brilliant only to the possessor: to others it may seem stupid, insipid, and frivolous; a vainglorious shadow, which self-love and flattery exaggerate; at one time the admiration of many, at another despised by them. On these things the proud man rests his pretensions to pride; on this weak foundation he builds the false and imaginary greatness which he idolizes.

DECEMBER 7.

ON THE EFFECTS OF PRIDE.

I. *It is a vice opposed to itself, and ruins the foundation it pretends to rest on.*

We are gratified with the praise, respect, and esteem of men, yet pride is the cause of our losing this gratification; for pride is odious and contemptible, and the desire we show of obtaining homage from men, debases us. On the contrary, true merit and greatness are worthy of esteem, respect, and veneration, when those who possess these advantages appear less dazzled by them.

II. *It never succeeds in its undertakings.*

Rashness, presumption, contempt of advice, a blind and ill-founded confidence in our own opinion, resistance to the truth, which others point out to us, are all the result of pride. For what will sooner throw a man into every difficulty than vices so opposite to reason,

the rules of prudence, and the light of wisdom?

DECEMBER 8.

ON THE DISPOSITIONS OF MEN WITH REGARD
TO HUMILITY.

I. *They love, value, and esteem it in others.*

They admire it in the opulent and great when they are not inflated with pride or elevated with grandeur. They admire it in inferiors who acknowledge their subjection and dependence, and in their equals who yield precedence to them in all things, and avoid coming in contact with them. They know the value and merit of humility: they give it due praise, and if we would credit their words, they are charmed with this virtue.

II. *But though men admire and approve of it in others, they are not disposed to practise it themselves.*

Why? Because the humility of others is extremely flattering to their pride,

which would be subdued and mortified if they practised that virtue. Humility makes others place themselves below us; if we were humble we should yield to them, and this is what our pride could not endure.

DECEMBER 9.

ON THE ADVANTAGE OF CHRISTIAN HUMILITY.

I. If we be truly and sincerely humble, our humility will be of more advantage to us than the greatest talents, or worldly prosperity, because it would secure our salvation. Talents and prosperity often serve only to excite and nourish pride. Several are lost by the dangerous brilliancy of their wit and success in life; but no one was ever lost by solid and true humility. No one has ever gone astray by following the voice which said: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

II. *We may supply exterior works of*

piety by humility, when we are prevented from practising them.

You may not have means to assist the poor when they apply to you ; humble yourself at your indigence, and that will make you resemble them. Sickness may prevent you from performing your usual works of piety ; humble yourself before God, and your humility will supply for the good works in which you are deficient.

DECEMBER 10.

ON THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

I. *A Christian should love every man in God :*

As being the work of God, who created him by his power. The living image of God, who formed him to his likeness.—The conquest and price of the merits of God, who redeemed him with his blood. The object of the charity of God, who has preserved him for his glory, and called him to his kingdom. All men by

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these different titles have an incontestable right to our love, and it is on these great and solid principles Christian charity is founded.

II. *A Christian looks on mankind as one family, of whom God is the Father.*

It is under the eyes of this tender and charitable Father, who would unite all men in his bosom, and desires that they should live like brethren, that we see mutual anarchy and dissension, cruel and obstinate wars, which end only with their lives. Charity is unknown amongst them; they have none of its sentiments; they do not even seek to have its appearances.

DECEMBER 11.

ON THE MOTIVE OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

I. *A Christian should love his neighbour for God.*

That is, to please God, who in some degree places in the same rank the love we owe our neighbour, and the love due

to himself, when he says that the second precept of the law is like unto the first : *Secundum autem simile est huic.* The love of our neighbour is contained in the love of God as in its principle, and the love of God is found in the love of our neighbour, as in its effect ; one is the necessary consequence of the other.

II. This motive makes our love supernatural and divine. It renders it universal, and gives it an extent that embraces all, high and low, rich and poor, equals and inferiors, friends and enemies. Without this motive, the precept of charity would be impracticable in many instances ; for it is very rarely we can love men for themselves. If we do not love them for the love of God, we shall never fulfil the precept that obliges us to love them as ourselves.

DECEMBER 12.

ON THE PRETEXTS WE MAKE USE OF TO VIOLATE THE PRECEPTS OF CHARITY.

I. *We find those pretexts in the innumerable faults of our neighbour.*

One is of so disagreeable a temper that he is insupportable to his own friends; another is false, ungrateful, and discontented, has a base and perfidious mind, is of a malignant disposition, sees evil in everything, and publishes it without scruple; he is a cruel and vindictive enemy, and how can we love or esteem such characters?

II. *All those pretexts should yield to Christian Charity.*

You are not desired to love your neighbour for his own sake or for those personal qualities which render him amiable. This would be a human motive, without merit in the sight of God; a motive subject to an infinity of variations and exceptions. But it is said to you: Love

your neighbour for God; all considerations should yield to this motive: God wills it; God demands it from you.

DECEMBER 13.

ON THE RULE OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

I. *A Christian loves his neighbour as God loves us.*

God is not only the object and motive of Christian charity, but its model. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." What love was ever more solid, sincere, or generous, than the love of Jesus Christ for us? Is our love for our neighbour as great as this?

II. *We sin against this rule, not only by hatred, contempt, and harshness, but by indifference.*

God not only forbids us to hate our neighbour, but he commands us to love him. It is not enough for a Christian to be good and useful to his friends, he should do good to all, according to his

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means and power. Charity is active ; it is not content with comforting with soft and compassionate words or obliging and useless wishes. It labours as much as possible to give real and effective marks of kindness. "My dear children," said St. John, "love not only in words, but in works."

DECEMBER 14.

ON HUMAN FRIENDSHIP.

I. *It is in general false.*

We meet with many in the world who are friends in name, appearance, and professions ; friends in interest, intrigue, politics, pleasures, and amusements ; but it is rare to meet with a sincere and true friend. At the first trial or reverse we meet with in life, all those friends will forsake us ; at the first disgrace that befalls us, they will abandon us, and treat us as if they had never known us. They change with fortune, and regulate their friendship by her caprices. Happy the

Christian who knows how to profit by the instability of human friendship, to unite himself to God!

II. *Friendships which appear the most sincere, are often the most fragile.*

A friendship may have lasted for years, and yet be broken in a moment; we may endeavour in vain to renew it. One moment has been sufficient to destroy it; and years are insufficient to re-establish it. All depends on the caprice of men; all that is subject to the empire of their passions receives the impression of their inconstancy. Christian charity has sentiments far more solid and durable; it is founded on religion which is always the same, and has for its principle and object, God, who never changes.

DECEMBER 15.

ON COMMUNION.

I. *Meditate seriously on those three reflections of St. Bernard as a preparation for it:*

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First: What is it you are going to receive? It is the adorable flesh of the Son of the Most High, equal in all things to his Father, who gives himself to you in the plenitude of his divinity. What greatness! what majesty! *Si attendas qui venit, quanta majestas!* Second, To whom does God give himself in communion? To the vilest of creatures, created out of nothing, and fallen into an abyss of sin. What an honour conferred on the sinner! What an abasement for God! *Si attendas ad quos venit, quanta dignatio!* What is it engages him to give himself to us in holy communion? A desire to save us and support us in a life of grace with this divine food. What excess of mercy and love! *Si propter quod venit, vide quanta sit latitudo charitatis!*

II. Fruit of these reflections.

The first reflection will inspire you with an ardent desire of preparing your heart as a dwelling worthy of God, and

consequently of purifying it from all the stains of sin. The second will inspire you with profound humility. The third will fill you with sincere love, and a lively gratitude to God, for being the author and protector of your salvation. These are necessary dispositions for a worthy communion.

DECEMBER 16.

ON INGRATITUDE TOWARDS GOD.

I. Nothing is more just than gratitude to God.

What have we that we have not received from his bountiful hand? Who is it that gives us all the comforts of life we possess, and the health and strength we enjoy? Who is it that has preserved us from a thousand hidden dangers with which God alone could know we were menaced, and from which he has preserved us, and as a proof of his generous love concealed from our knowledge?

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II. *Nothing is more rare than gratitude to God.*

Who is it that thinks of his benefits? Who is it that returns him thanks for them? We would be ashamed of being ungrateful to men; we would blush at being called unthankful; and to whom do we owe so many thanks and so much gratitude as to God? For are not the favours we receive from men, the pure effects of his bounty? Yet we turn his benefits against himself, and make use of them to offend him.

DECEMBER 17.

ON SUBMISSION OF THE MIND TO THE TRUTHS
OF FAITH.

I. *This submission is always necessary.*

Reason is the light of man, and faith is the light of the Christian. God commands us to honour him by the homage of our heart and mind. We render him

the first by faith, and the second by love. Faith elevates and consecrates our mind in unison with the wisdom of God.

II. *This submission should appear in our conduct.*

Philosophy encourages the vain speculations of human reason ; but the "just live by faith." They judge of everything by the principles of faith, and they act always by its direction. What does faith teach us concerning the pleasures, riches, and greatness of the world ? What idea does it give us of the passing vanities of this life, of the unhappiness of those who wander in the broad and spacious way that conducts to hell ? It is on these principles and not on the opinions of the world that a true Christian regulates his conduct and sentiments.

DECEMBER 18.

ON SORROW.

I. *"Abandon not your soul to sorrow," said the wise man, "and be not afflicted in your thoughts."*

There are moments of our life when our hearts are as if drowned in the bitterness of sorrow. To remedy this evil, examine its cause. Does your sorrow rise from your being a slave to one or many passions, which you cannot gratify, from the impatience or multiplicity of your desires, from some vexatious event that troubles the serenity of your days? If you loved nothing in preference to God, nothing would be capable of afflicting you. We are only afflicted with the privation or loss of whatever is most dear to us, and those who love God can never lose him; he never forsakes them, nor removes himself from them.

II. *The second means to banish sorrow, is, to have recourse to God.*

"If any one is in sorrow, let him pray," said St. James. "My soul," said the prophet, "rejected all consolation; I have thought of God and rejoiced." "It is not," says St. Augustine, "in the dissipation of exterior objects, and in the vain amusements of the world, that we must seek a remedy for sorrow; it is in the recollection of the interior man, it is within ourselves, in this retreat of the heart we must meditate and pray."

DECEMBER 19.

ON TWO KINDS OF SORROW.

I. "*There is,*" says St. Basil, "*a sorrow that comes from the spirit of God, and a sorrow that arises from the spirit of the world.*"

The first, which all true Christians are sensible of, proceeds from a recollection of their sins. The second, the consideration of the great number of crimes and abominations committed every day in the world. The third, a desire of their ce-

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lestial country. "Seated on the shores of Babylon," said the Israelites, "we weep at the remembrance of Sion."

II. *The sorrow that arises from the spirit of the world is impatient and vexatious.*

It throws us into despair; it leaves us without help or resource; it regrets the loss of the goods of this life, without a hope of being recompensed for them in the next. It renders us incapable of receiving those sweet consolations from God which comfort a faithful soul.

DECEMBER 20.

ON THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH GOD.

I. *God is in our soul, and proves to the just the sweetness of his presence.*

First, by the grace of union: that is, sanctifying and habitual grace, which unites them to him, and makes them pleasing in his sight. Secondly, by the grace of direction; that celestial light, which enlightens their mind, and regulates

the motions of their heart. Thirdly, by the grace of protection. "The Lord is in me," said the prophet; "he is my light, my life, my strength and my salvation—what have I to fear?" Fourthly, by the grace of consolation; this divine unction which softens the bitterness of their tears, and makes them happy even in their afflictions.

II. *Nothing is more necessary or more precious than this union of our soul with God.*

It is the pledge of our salvation; all is lost when we lose it—all is gained if we possess it; we cannot lose it but by sin; that derives us of sanctifying and habitual grace, of the constant direction of actual grace, of the protection of God, of tasting the sweet consolations of grace. We are unworthy of all if we are guilty of sin.

DECEMBER 21.

ON THE PEACE OF THE HEART.

I. *This peace dwells only in the heart of the just.*

There "is no peace for the wicked," says the Scripture: *Non est pax impiis*; their heart is like a troubled sea: *Impii quasi mare fervens*. They only enjoy a false peace, which makes them slumber in their vices, a lethargic sloth, the forerunner of death in sin. On the contrary, grace, justice, and peace, reign in the souls of the just: *Gratia et pax, justitia et pax*; but their heart is the abode of peace, only when it is submissive to the empire of justice and grace.

II. *The means of acquiring the peace of the heart :*

Is to conform our will always to the will of God, and to place our entire confidence in him. A pillar remains firm and immovable when it rests on a secure foundation. If we rely on "an arm

of flesh," that is, on creatures, we shall never enjoy the sweets of peace, for we will daily experience their inconstancy. The just, relying on "the arm of God," remains firm and unshaken, for in God there is "neither change nor darkness, nor shade of vicissitude."

DECEMBER 22.

ON DEATH IN SIN.

I. As we live, so we die: this is a truth which experience confirms every day.

Those who have lived impiously have only the appearance of faith and religion at the hour of their death; and we have seen many who have rejected even the appearance of either. Those who have lived in the slavery of voluptuousness, have carried to the grave the fire that devoured them. Those who have lived in the forgetfulness of God, and indifference to their salvation, have died without compunction. The menace of Jesus Christ is daily accomplished: "You shall

die in your sins:" in the sins in which you have always indulged; in the sin that governed you, and the sin that gratified you more than any other during your life.

II. *To avoid so great a misery, we should live in the grace of God.*

We must "seek the Lord when we can find him, and invoke him when he is near us;" and not wait to return to him when he is removed from us. A time will come when we will seek him and not find him—"at the hour of death;" and have only a vain desire of repentance when we should have its fruits.

DECEMBER 23.

ON INCONSTANCY IN THE WAY OF SALVATION.

I. *Nothing is more common than this inconstancy in the service of God.*

Sometimes a sinner, and sometimes a penitent, we waver perpetually between Jesus Christ and Belial; between light and darkness; between vice and virtue. A thousand times we give our heart to

God, and as many times we return to the pleasures and vanities of the world. We carry the yoke of the Lord for a time, and we then become weary and disgusted with it.

II. *Nothing is more opposite to the spirit of God than this inconstancy.*

God is immutable, and it is his will that the virtues of his servants, in some degree, partake of this immutability. He despises the homage of an inconstant soul who has scarcely made one step towards salvation, when it returns to its first errors. He loves those fervent and unchangeable souls who attach themselves to him for ever.

DECEMBER 24.

ON RESISTANCE TO THE TRUTHS OF FAITH.

I. *This resistance proceeds rather from the heart than the spirit.*

We reject the truths of faith, and freely admit of doubts and difficulties that combat them, only when the passions and

interest of the heart are opposed to the submission of the mind. The reasoning that attacks religion was never the result of the speculations of a virtuous and chaste man. "The foolish man has said in his heart there is no God." This horrible blasphemy came not from his mind—his reason was too enlightened to produce it : it was his heart, blinded by the passions of his mind, which suggested it. Subdue these passions, and the mind will become submissive.

II. *Means of vanquishing this resistance.*

The first is to correct the vices of the heart. The work of faith is commenced by the mind, and finished by the heart ; which renders it entire and perfect. It is not sufficient to believe the truths proposed to us : we must love them, and when we love them, faith remains firm and assured. The second is to ask of God the gift of faith. You complain that you have little faith : God alone can give it to you. Ask it with humility, constancy,

and fervour. "Lord, increase my faith. I believe : but yet, Lord, there remains in my soul a fund of incredulity. Assist me to overcome it."

DECEMBER 25.

ON THE OBSTACLES THAT OPPOSE THE GRACE
OF FAITH.

I. Faith is a gift of God ; but the obstacles we oppose, prevent us from receiving it.

You say : "I wish to have that lively faith and wisdom that enlightened the saints ; I expect that God will grant it to me ;" but how can you believe that so precious a gift can ever be granted to your indolence, and that this grace will be conferred on you when you do nothing to obtain it ? "I seek it," you say ; but do you expect to find it in the impious and licentious conversations of the world ; in reading dangerous books that increase the passions and poison the heart ? Another says : "I read and examine every

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thing to dispel my doubts ;" but you read and examine only to increase them.

II. *These obstacles are not insurmountable*: To upright hearts; to sincere and pure souls, who seek the truth without prejudice, without passion, and without interest. "If I have faith," worldlings sometimes say, "I would soon break all the chains that bind me to sin." But they may be answered, "you would soon have faith, if you broke these chains."

DECEMBER 26.

ON PROVIDENCE.

I. *God directs by his Providence every thing that happens in the world.*

The Providence of God not only directs the great events on which depend the rise and fall of empires and kingdoms ; but he orders or permits the most trivial incidents that concern the poorest of men. "A hair falls not from your head," says the Saviour, "without the order or consent of Providence." Chance is nothing ; it is a

senseless term. It expresses an unknown cause that does not exist; for the first principle or cause of all events must exist, and this cause we distinctly know is the Providence of God.

II. *The use which a Christian should make of this truth.*

Let us reflect on this superior cause, and we shall no longer entertain the same views with regard to what passes in the world. We shall no longer behold the innocent oppressed; we shall rather see the just tried by affliction, or the sinner punished. What is a murder in the eyes of him who refers every thing to Providence? It is a sentence of death justly pronounced in heaven and unjustly executed on earth. What is an ingrate? He is a man whose ingratitude God makes use of, to teach us to do good without expecting any recompense for it but from himself.

DECEMBER 27.

ON THE STATE OF SIN.

I. *All the good we do in the state of mortal sin, has no merit before God.*

We may say many prayers, practise mortifications, and perform good works in the state of sin; but they are of no merit in the sight of God: because the state of sin is a state of death, in which we can perform no act of life, that is, no act which, being performed in the life of grace, would conduct us to a state of glory. Mortal sin separates us from Jesus Christ. "I am the vine," said he, "you are the branches; if the branch is separated from the vine, it bears no fruit, neither can you, if you do not remain in me."

II. *It would be an abuse of this truth if we were to renounce prayer and good works, because we are in the state of sin.*

The sinner says:—"I am in disgrace

with God ; why shall I pray or perform any religious duty when it will not avail to my salvation ?" Fatal and ill-founded reasoning ! first, because there are duties of obligation which cannot be omitted even in the state of sin, without our being guilty of a new sin ; and secondly, the sinner should increase the number of his good works and prayers, to obtain from God the grace to amend his life.

DECEMBER 28.

ON THE PERFECT LAW.

I. *The evangelical law is the law spoken of by the apostle St. James, when he says : " Those who attentively consider the perfect law," &c.*

It is called *perfect*, because there is nothing inconsistent in its perfection ; if it severely forbids private revenge, it permits and authorizes public punishment on offenders ; if it proscribes avarice, and too great an attachment to the goods of this world, it does not forbid us

to enrich ourselves by honest and lawful means ; if it condemns luxury and extravagance, it approves of those expenses which our condition in life requires. The law is perfect in itself, by the perfection with which it regulates every state, and corrects every disorder.

II. *There is nothing imperfect in its moderation.*

If it distinguishes precepts from counsels, it declares that the contempt of counsels leads to the transgression of precepts ; if it inspires sinners with a salutary confidence to preserve them from despair, it shows them sufficient motives to forbid presumption ; it disapproves of an excess of exterior mortification, it places no limits to that of the passions.

DECEMBER 29.

ON IMPERFECT OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

I. *The principle of our imperfect obedience is, a desire to satisfy our passions without prejudice to our salvation.*

We have just reason to fear the judgments of God if we violate his law in essential points, and we obey it in certain things to save ourselves from eternal damnation: yet we will not submit our passions without reserve to that limited and unrestrained obedience it requires, but allow ourselves free liberty in every thing that does not amount to crime. We say, it is only a too lively attachment, and we avoid every thing that would render it criminal—it is only a slight mark of aversion; but we never carry it to the extent of revenge.

II. *The danger of this imperfect obedience to the law of God.*

We do not sufficiently know our passions if we flatter ourselves that in yield-

ing to them we can restrain them within just limits.—They are always extreme in their desires, and it is as natural for them to tend to excess, as it is reasonable to avoid and subdue them.

DECEMBER 30.

ON THE LAW OF FASTING.

I. *The general end of this law is the mortification of the flesh.*

But this mortification has three subordinate effects which render this law infinitely salutary. "Fast," says St. Chrysostom, "because you have sinned: *Jejuna quia peccasti*;" it is a satisfaction which you owe to the divine justice which you have offended. "Fast, that you may sin no more: *Jejuna, ut non pecces*;" it is a precaution you must take to withdraw yourself from the empire of your senses, and conquer the desire of the flesh. "Fast to draw down upon you the blessings of heaven: *Jejuna, ut accipias*;" it is a means to obtain them.

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II. *We too easily seek for dispensations from the law of fasting.*

It is true we may be dispensed from the law of fasting; but there must be a real necessity to make the dispensation valid; it does not depend on man to change upon earth what the Lord has ordained in heaven. Reflect that this necessity, true or false, will one day be weighed in the balance of God's justice, and with what a burden your conscience will be charged, if your exemption from fasting arose from false delicacy, or imaginary fears.

DECEMBER 31.

ON TRUE FASTING.

I. *True fasting is that which is referred to God.*

And which we observe not through custom or habit, but from a sincere desire to obtain pardon and mercy from God, to appease his wrath and receive his grace. "Has your fasting been referred

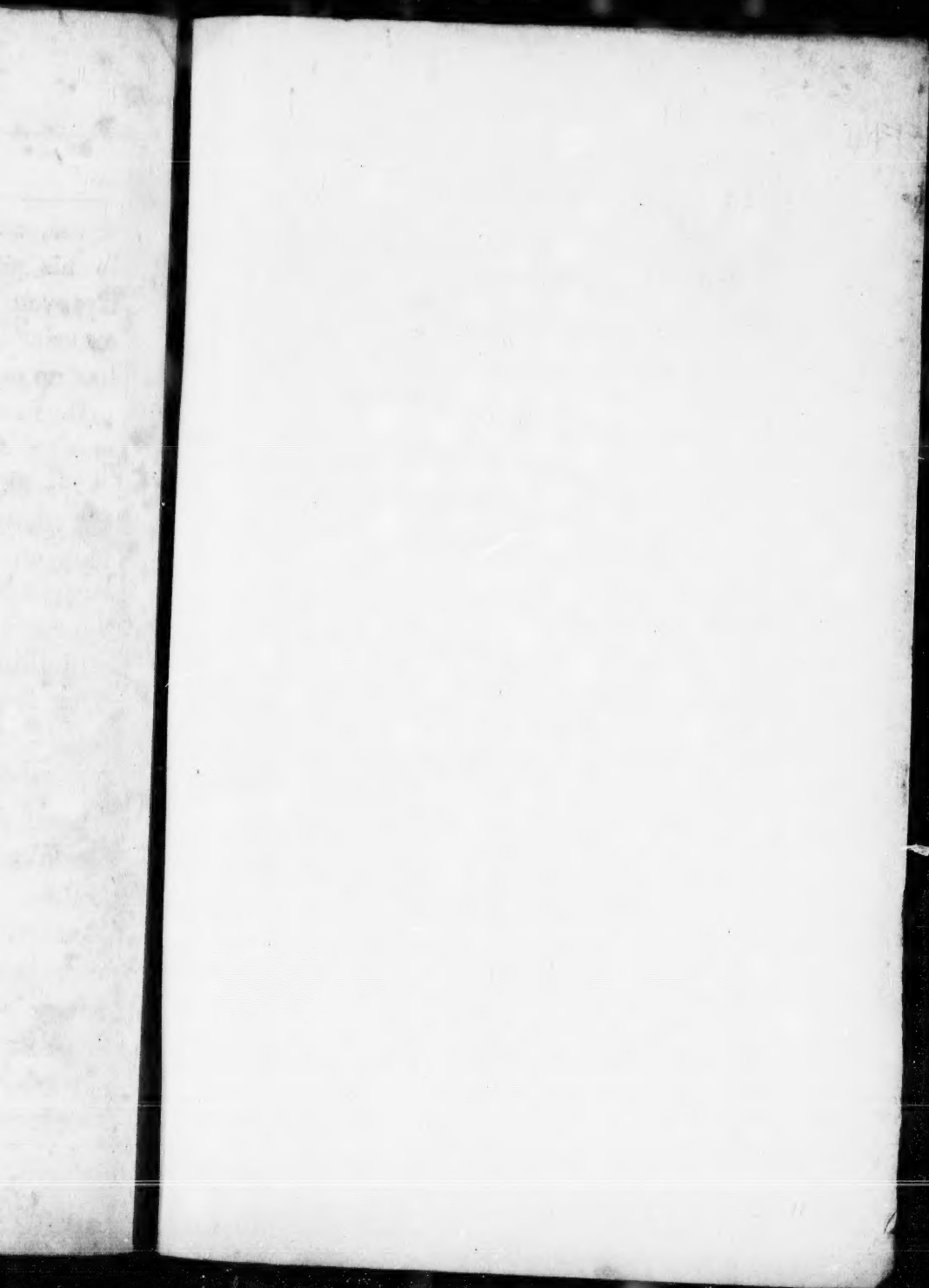
to me, and for my love?" said the Lord to his people, by his prophet Zachary. Are you not satisfied with the simple exterior of devotion in which your heart has no part?

II. *Fasting should be accompanied by prayer, and works of mercy.*

"Lord," said the Israelites, "we have fasted, and you have not vouchsafed to look on us." "Be not surprised," answered the Lord, by the prophet Isaias, "for even on the day of your fasting you still think of satisfying your passions.—The fast I approve of is, to break the bonds of iniquity, and divide your bread with the hungry."



Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely from a 17th or 18th-century manuscript. The text is arranged in several paragraphs, with some lines indented. The ink is dark and the paper shows signs of age and wear.



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